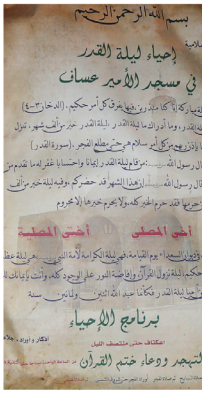
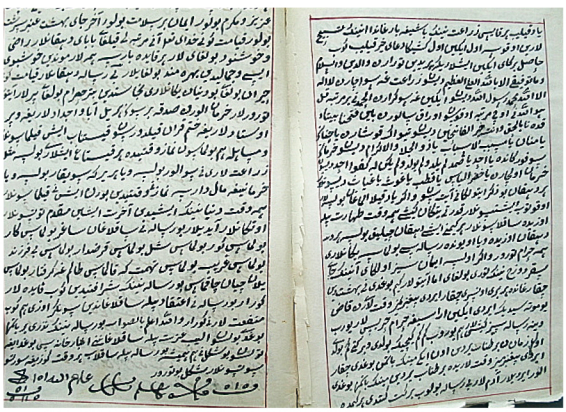
Performing Religion: Actors, contexts, and texts

Case studies on Islam

Edited by Ines Weinrich





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Performing Religion:
Actors, contexts, and texts
Case studies on Islam

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Table of Contents

List of Plates

Cover illustrations

Figure 1: The *quba*ᶜ, the central object of the pilgrimage to Qabr Hūd, Yemen. 2008. Photo by Marianus Hundhammer.

Figure 2: Church of Saydet Hawka (Our Lady of Hawka), in the Qadisha Valley (Valley of the Saints), lighting candles and leaving written vows on the altar. 2013. Photo by Nour Farra-Haddad.

Figure 3: Invitation to the celebration of *laylat al-qadr* in Downtown Beirut. 2010. Photo by Ines Weinrich.

Figure 4: Woman wearing the costume of the Virgin Mary in the old city of Damascus in consequence of a vow. 2007. Photo by Ines Weinrich.

Figure 5: Manuscript of a Central Asian *risāla*, including text and non-verbal communication acts. MS IVRUz-1 7287, fols. 358r-360r, here fols. 359v-360r.

Figure 6: *bazm-i arvāḥ-i pīr*: Feast for a Central Asian pīr with musicians. Late 19th century. Abbildungsnachweis: Turkestanskij Alᶜbom, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-09953-00043 (digital file from Part 2, vol. 2, pl. 91, no. 304).

Marianus Hundhammer
Antique Phallic Symbol or Mobile Relic? Remarks on the Cult of the *quba*ᶜ in Ḥaḍramaut

Nour Farra-Haddad
Shared Rituals through *ziyārāt* in Lebanon: A Typology of Christian and Muslim Practices

Jeanine Elif Dağyeli
A "Deserted Site of Display": Performing the Crafts' *risāla* in Pre-socialist Central Asia

Songül Karahasanoğlu
Burning With Love: Consumerism and Recent Trends in Islamic Music in Turkey

Preface

This volume is one component in a wider process of exploring the relation between texts and actors. An initial step was made at the Deutscher Orientalistentag of 2010 in Marburg on the panel 'Handlung, Text und Kontext. Überlegungen zu Gattungsbegriffen, Definitionen und Kategorien', organized in cooperation with Ulrike Stohrer.[1] The panel was followed by the international conference 'Performing Religion: Actors, contexts, and texts', held at the Orient-Institut Beirut in November 2011. The core of this volume's contributions was presented at this conference.[2] Another outcome of the conference was a subsequent joint workshop, organized by the Cluster of Excellence 'Asia and Europe in a Global Context' (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg) and the Orient-Institut Beirut: 'Aesthetics of the Sublime: Religious texts and rhetorical theory' held in Cairo in December 2012. The publication of the workshop is forthcoming. The contributions collected in the volume at hand reflect the multiple academic backgrounds and angles that were present at the conference in Beirut: Islamic Studies, Religious Studies, Cultural Anthropology, Literary Studies, and Musicology. I share the conviction that the study of religious practice can benefit from such a plurality of approaches.

A note on transliteration

The transliteration of quotations and terms in Oriental languages is based on the system of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft[3] but uses the common English spelling for certain consonants (th, j, kh, dh, sh, gh) and does not assimilate the article. However, changes in scholarly interests became tangible in the formal considerations which arose in the process of editing. The study of Islam is no longer limited to regions of the Middle East but takes account of the religion's global and transnational character. In our case, it includes Islam's agents of Europe and North America, be they migrants or converts. This influenced the formal editing process of this volume: the Islamic (and often Arabic) names of Italian converts are spelled as they spell them themselves. Given the international character and environment of the Burhaniya [Burhāniyya] Sufi order, its name

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1 The contribution by Marius Hundhammer stems from this panel.

2 As part of the conference, Marion Katz elaborated on the communicative structure of ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) and her contribution can be read in full length in her monograph (Marion Katz, *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press 2013, chapter three).

3 *Die Transliteration der arabischen Schrift und ihrer Anwendung auf die Hauptliteratursprachen der islamischen Welt. Denkschrift dem 19. Orientalistenkongress in Rom*, vorgelegt von der Trankriptionskommission der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft in Kommission bei F. A. Brockhaus 1935.

Tariqa Burhaniya is spelled like it appears on the order's English website, thus as it is known to its followers and sympathizers. This holds equally for names and terms used in the religious movement of Universal Sufism. The names of Lebanese villages and towns are spelled as they appear on street signs and maps or are pronounced in common parlance to make them trackable on maps, navigation apps, or through inquiries to the local population. In many cases, the transliteration is provided in […] when the name or term is mentioned for the first time. Common terms and names of places have not been transcribed (e.g. Qur'an, Sura, Mecca).

Acknowledgments

The conference "Performing Religion: Actors, contexts, and texts" at the Orient-Institut Beirut was made possible by generous financial support from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. A research grant by the Max Weber Foundation following my position at the Orient-Institut Beirut allowed me to finalize my own contribution and to progress in the editing process. The manuscript was finalized and the proofs were corrected during my stay at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg "Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe" (Ruhr-Universität Bochum). To all these institutions I would like to express my gratitude.

I am also grateful to the Orient-Institut Beirut and its director Stefan Leder for supporting the idea and implementation of the conference. I am especially indebted to the staff and student assistants at the Orient-Institut for doing a marvellous job during the conference to create an intense and inspiring working atmosphere.

I would like to thank the editorial board of the series Beiruter Texte und Studien (BTS) for including this volume in their series. Finally, I like to thank Carly McLaughlin for her excellent work in language editing and Torsten Wollina at the Orient-Institut who has overseen the production process.

Introduction: From Texts to Performances

Ines Weinrich

A brief look at the history of the study of Islam: Texts, contexts, and actors

The study of Islam as a religious belief system has been primarily undertaken as a study of texts. This is fairly self-evident, as the main religious medium is a written text. Around this text, the Qur'an, various branches of indigenous scholarship have developed, partly driven by the wish and need to understand its meaning and to read it with an understanding of the social reality of a given society. These branches include fields like linguistics, historiography, exegesis, and law and have been written in Arabic as well as other languages. Thus, philological competence is a must in the study of Islam.

Yet, for a long time the main written text in Islam was treated solely as a book, i.e. a textual composition in its entirety, and the oral character of the text and its formation was thereby largely neglected. This neglect refers, on the one hand, to its main mediality as oral performance during and as ritual, that is, its recitation as a means to re-enact and to complete the miracle of Divine interaction with the Human. It also refers, on the other hand, to the Qur'anic text as a reflection of a communicative process taking place during the emergence of the early Muslim community. Rhetorical devices, topics, and the composition of Suras reveal the interaction with the cultures and belief systems of that time and indicate the development of an Islamic liturgical practice.[1] This holds equally for the study of many other texts whose primary function does not lie in written form. Angelika Neuwirth rightly remarks that one of the more recent textbooks on Islamic ritual does not contain any example of a ritually employed text.[2]

With respect to the study of ritual, scholarly interest has lain primarily in the historical development of ritual and the identification of pre-Islamic elements

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1 Cf. Andreas Kellermann, "Die Mündlichkeit des Koran. Ein forschungsgeschichtliches Problem der Arabistik", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* 5 (1995), 1-33; William A. Graham and Navid Kermani, "Recitation and Aesthetic Reception", in: *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006, 115-141; Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang*, Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen 2010, especially chapter one for an overview of the research history and chapter six for liturgical development.

2 Neuwirth, *Der Koran*, 346, referring to Gerald Hawting, ed., *The Development of Islamic Ritual*, Ashgate: Variorum 2006.

which have been incorporated into Islamic ritual.[3] On the other hand, the study of small-scale Muslim communities and their religious practices, the interaction between religious specialists and believers, the use of the body or of devices aiming at the senses has often been carried out by scholars from the field of Cultural Anthropology – to the extent that we can actually speak of a division of labour between Islamic Studies and Cultural Anthropology. This labour division has unfortunately led to a tendency which has further deepened the division: studies of Islamic religious practice have tended to focus on the seemingly sensational, on the so-called 'different': Sufi practices, religious minorities, or so-called 'folk' or 'popular' religion. Valuable as these works are, showing the great diversity of Islamic practices and lending deep insight into individual forms of it, they have at the same time suggested – often without intention – that the use of aesthetic sensation or bodily techniques is limited to the extra-ordinary practices and groups of Islam. With the aforementioned labour division, a thematic and conceptual division also evolved: that between 'normative' and 'non-conformist' Islam, the latter being defined by deviancy. This notion becomes problematic when we look at social reality, as many Muslims who participate in *dhikr* or *mawlid* gatherings or perform *ziyāra* would consider this as meritoriously pious and often: as Sunni practice. Recently, a growing body of scholarly literature on religious practice has emerged, especially in the field of historical studies, due to interest in historical anthropology and a growing awareness of the problematic binary of popular culture vs. elite culture.[4] The critical voices of *'ulamā'* writing in the 13th or 14th century on a variety of believers' practices, for instance, should not be read as an indication of a clear-cut division between elite and folk practice but as a discourse on power vis-à-vis popular preachers or Sufi shaykhs who base themselves on other forms of cultural capital than the formal education of the traditional scholar.[5]

Religion performed

The fact that only a few studies on Islam have relied on the observation and analysis of practice is not unique to Islamic Studies but is symptomatic of a gen-

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3 Cf. William A. Graham, "Islam in the Mirror of Ritual", in: *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis, eds, Malibu, California: Undena Publications 1983, 53-71.

4 Amongst others: Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous:* Ziyāra *and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*, Leiden: Brill 1999; Jonathan P. Berkey, "Popular Culture under the Mamluks: A Historiographical Survey", *Mamluk Studies Review* 9 (2005), 133-146; Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146-1260)*, Leiden: Brill 2007; Stephan Conermann, ed., *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies – State of the Art*, Göttingen: Bonn University Press 2013.

5 Cf. Berkey, "Popular Culture", 139 ff.

eral trend. Equally, in Religious Studies, 'ritual thought' and 'ritual action' have been treated as rather separate entities of study.[6] Growing interest in the study of ritual, including secular ritual and addressing issues of arbitrariness and meaninglessness, has emerged since the 1970s.[7] Although the question of what a ritual is does not form the key question of this volume, a variety of rituals constitute the basis of its authors' observations and examinations: local pilgrimage, the recitation of praise poetry, the crafts' *risāla* or elegies, *dhikr*, preaching and praying. Rather than setting out for yet another attempt at defining 'ritual', I will briefly name elements of a cluster of characteristics which define ritual that are relevant for questions addressed in this volume. Rituals are thus understood as a sequence of acts which

- are carried out after planning or spontaneously
- can be, or are, repeated
- rely on different modes of authorization (e.g. age, charisma, framing by salvation narratives)
- are performed with intention (sometimes emphasized by a formal *niyya*)
- are not necessarily performed and understood by all actors in the same way
- can be altered, negotiated, or changed
- both display and produce reality
- transform the everyday.

The shift towards an emphasis on the study of ritual practice coincided with the so-called *performative turn* in Cultural Studies.[8] Building on theories developed in the field of Linguistics (most prominently John L. Austin's series of lectures *How to do Things with Words*, 1955, published 1962), performance theory was adopted and expanded by Theatre Studies.[9] It has been elaborated as an effective tool for analysing the dual quality of performance as being both material and ephemeral.[10] This dual quality holds equally for the performance of ritual. Drawing on the etymology of 'performance' from Latin 'per' ('through') and 'forma' ('form'), Ronald Grimes states that "ritual […] would count as performance insofar as it is

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6 This fact has been most prominently voiced by Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 1992.

7 Cf. Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 1997; Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg, eds, *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, Leiden and Boston: Brill 2006 for both the history and different schools of ritual studies and a re-evaluation of major concepts.

8 Cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, Reinbek: Rowohlt 2006, 38, 104-143.

9 Cf. amongst others Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* [1988], rev. ed., New York and London: Routledge 2003; Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 2004; Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Performativität*, Bielefeld: transcript 2012.

10 Cf. Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik*, chapter four on the materiality of performance.

formal behaviour".[11] Other than this, he argues in favour of keeping ritual distinct from performance, thus emphasizing both similarities and differences between the two.[12] The intention to study not only the structure of rituals but also their mediation is reflected in a more recent shift in Religious Studies towards aesthetics and material culture.[13] This field of studying religion emphasizes the role of the body and of objects; interest lies less in the study of abstract thought than of practice, of the 'doing with' as an important factor which shapes meaning:

> Nowadays scholars of material culture are much more intrigued by the felt-knowledge that looking, touching, shopping, revering, or praying constitutes. The context for understanding things, in other words, is practice. But practice is understood as the cultivation of embedded or embodied ways of knowing. […] Meaning is a complex process of interaction in which people, objects, environments, histories, words, and ideas take part.[14]

Notably, this view embraces both directions: how people handle and use things as well as how things may shape human behaviour. Here, performance is understood less in its theatrical dimension and more in a general sense as social practice.

> Performance has encouraged the development of a much more robust, less intellectualized understanding of the social construction of reality. Social performance is understood to make public attitudes, to create shared consciousness, to order social fields, to circulate feelings, and thereby to establish consensus, which may be thought of as the social body of a group.[15]

In the volume at hand, performance is understood in two ways. It is understood as practice, as the way of dealing with objects and ideas as a means to ascribe meaning to them. Within this understanding, performance is scrutinized in a narrower sense in its relation to text. Here, it signifies the materialization of text by bringing it into an acoustically manifested form, that is, into a different materiality than the text's chemical consistency ('ink on paper'). This acoustic materiality is not limited to the mere verbalization of words but also includes non-verbal elements which

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11 Ronald L. Grimes, "Performance", in: *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg, eds, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 379-394, here 381.

12 Grimes, "Performance", 382 f., 392 f.

13 'Religionsästhetik' or 'Religionsaisthetik' and 'Materiale Religion' in German; cf. Jürgen Mohn, "Religionsaisthetik: Religion(en) als Wahrnehmungsräume", in: *Religionswissenschaft*, Michael Stausberg, ed., Berlin: de Gruyter 2012, S. 329-334; Inken Prohl, "Materiale Religion", in: *Religionswissenschaft*, Michael Stausberg, ed., Berlin: de Gruyter 2012, 379-392; in English 'Material Religion'. A journal of the same name, devoted to this aspect, was established in 2005, cf. "Editorial Statement", in: *Material Religion* 1 (2005), 4-8. For a more recent volume on the mediation of religion see Sally M. Promey, ed., *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014.

14 David Morgan, "The Materiality of Cultural Construction", *Material Religion* 4 (2008), 228-229, here 228.

15 David Morgan, "Materiality, Social Analysis, and the Study of Religion", in: *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, David Morgan, ed., London and New York: Routledge 2010, 55-74, here 66.

accompany and constitute performance, like facial expressions, the treatment of time, or the creation of atmosphere. Writing on literature in a general sense, Ruth Finnegan defines performance as "realization as a publicly enacted display in the here and now"[16]. Such a performance allows the audience to experience the sensual quality of a text, it involves the body, and it creates interaction between the religious or ritual specialist (the performer) and the audience.

Whereas the first understanding studies performative practice which produces reality, the second understanding studies the performative qualities of a text. Rather than viewing texts merely as repositories of data, the concern is to highlight the role of agency in people's dealings with texts.[17]

Acts – texts – interpretations

The contributions in this volume explore the place and function of texts in religious practice; they study not only what a text does to listeners – how it is received, how listeners get emotionally involved –, but also the relation of the believers to text: what is done with texts, how do people use, value, or alter them. The contributions ask how religious practice is reflected in texts, scrutinize their relation to objects, study verbalized and non-verbalized ideas, and read rituals as texts.

The volume is divided into three sections. The first section deals with objects, texts, and acts carried out in the context of the positive power or blessing which may be acquired by believers: it asks how objects are used, what types of actions are performed, and what notions arise around concepts of blessing (*baraka*) and its acquisition.

The contribution of Marianus Hundhammer shows how the investigation of textual sources isolated from actual practice may lead to assumptions which do not match the religious meaning and significance attributed by the doers. In the case of the *quba*ʿ, an important object within the local pilgrimage to the tomb of the

16 Ruth Finnegan, "The How of Literature", *Oral Tradition* 20 (2005), 164-187, here 164.

17 The emphasis of this volume lies on religious practice as ritual practice. Regarding texts in the milieu of teaching and religious scholarship, see Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler, eds, *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources*, Beirut: Ergon 2011; Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2012 and their respective bibliographies. Studies on contemporary practices have been conducted in the field of *mawlid* – albeit mainly with regard to theological controversies or the celebrations' interrelationship with political power – and of Shiite ʿĀshūrāʾ practices, here predominantly on processions and the passion play and less on the performance of poetry and narratives. With regard to language performance, the studies by Charles Hirschkind – for the context of audio-taped sermons in Cairo – and by Linda Jones – on medieval Arab homiletics – should be mentioned (Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, New York: Columbia University Press 2006; Linda G. Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press 2012).

prophet Hūd in Yemen, attention has been focused on the outer (phallic) form of the object, missing the fact that the objects kept inside are the bearers of religious meaning. It is only through a combination of philological study and fieldwork that one can approach the meaning of the object and the actions performed with it. His contribution nevertheless also broaches the limits of fieldwork, here cases in which members hesitate to provide full information to outsiders of the community or feel restricted when writing or talking about sacred objects.

Nour Farra-Haddad elaborates on practices which in most cases do not have any fixed or written sets of rules but nevertheless constitute an essential part of lived religion for many Christians and Muslims in Lebanon. She presents immensely rich material stemming from her extensive fieldwork on various sites in Lebanon which are religiously meaningful to Christian Catholics, Christian Orthodox, Muslim Sunni, Shiite, Druze, and other confessional groups. Tombs, shrines, chapels, caves or other natural sites are visited by believers to seek support, to express gratitude, to perform a vow, and, above all, to obtain blessing (*baraka*). Farra-Haddad shows the wide range of performed acts and touches on how traditions and rites are generated, for instance through the imitation of spontaneous acts. Her contribution furthermore documents the commonalities between different confessional groups in Lebanon which is manifested in the practices of local pilgrimage.

Gebhard Fartacek and Lorenz Nigst researched similar sites in Syria. Whereas Farra-Haddad focuses on the different types of (shared) actions, Fartacek and Nigst focus on the overall operational mode of *baraka*. Analysing the concepts of 'holy place' and '*baraka*' in relation to everyday life, they show that the overall goal of acquiring *baraka* is 'good' communal living according to local norms and values (norm-conformant mode). To achieve this, pilgrims nevertheless have to perform actions they term as 'not normal', and the person who is responsible for having imbued a specific place with *baraka* has likewise accomplished this as a result of breaking with norms for the sake of God (dissociative mode). These contrary but complementary modes of *baraka*, read within the 'structure' and 'anti-structure' of Victor Turner's theory of ritual, the authors argue, explain the healing effects of *baraka* for its believers.

Whereas the contributions by Hundhammer, Farra-Haddad, Fartacek and Nigst study the acquisition of blessing through the rites of local pilgrimage, Stefan Reichmuth highlights a different context of blessing, that of Sufi scholarship in the 18th century. Focusing on the writings of the Sufi scholar Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791), he examines the role of the Sufi chains of transmission (*salāsil*). The intensified accumulation of Sufi chains and the parallels it shows with structures of the transmission of prophetic traditions is characteristic of a type of Sufi writing developed from the 15th century onwards. It reveals a new quality of the chains as bearers of blessing, manifested in the growing lists of chains which are in some cases an attempt to trace back to the prophet himself.

In the second part of the book, authors study the use and composition of literary texts in the widest sense. This part explores how texts are used in ritual settings, how they are publically enacted and what kinds of performances are inscribed into the text. It further draws on questions of genre and textual modes, especially the dynamics between oral and written forms of texts.

Ines Weinrich studies contemporary usages of the 13th-century poem *al-Burda* by the Mamluk poet al-Būṣīrī, one of the most renowned poems of praise for the prophet Muḥammad. This poem of 160 verses is performed either in its entirety or in selected parts. Particularly striking are its framing by prayer verses and the use of an antiphon and refrain which turns the text's linear structure into a strophic one. The refrain provides not only the basis for alternate singing, thus adding a participatory element; it also serves, through its form as an invocation of blessings for the prophet, a ritual function by securing the recitation's efficacy. Based on fieldwork carried out in urban Sunni milieus in Beirut, Weinrich's study identifies two major forms of performance, the litany style and the *qaṣīda* style. These correspond to the different functions of the poem: as a supplication and ritual re-enactment of the poem's transformative power, as a prayer for the occasion of *laylat al-qadr*, and as praise for the prophet in a more general sense. As such, the poem's function is primarily defined by its performance mode rather than by its textual character.

Jeanine Dağyeli explores the problems of researching historical performances: her contribution features the craft's *risāla* in Central Asia in the 19th and early 20th century. The *risāla* contains information on the origin of the craft, the craft's patron, and moral conduct, as well as basic concepts of Islam and prayers which should accompany the various stages of the production process. Copied frequently, altered according to the needs of the audience, recited publicly, kept as a book in the work space and used as an amulet, the *risāla* more than once straddles the boundaries between genres, the divine and mundane spheres, and written and oral text. Operating at the interstices of oral and written tradition, the oral and the written modes serve different functions: as a channel for the flux of information and emotional responses on the one hand and as authorization, latent magical communication acts, and *aide mémoire* on the other.

The textual genre which Roxane Haag-Higuchi examines in her contribution is of particular interest for its performative character: religious elegies in the context of Shiite mourning sessions. Performed together with the recitation of martyr narratives, the passion play, or street processions, they are one component of a dense ritual texture which commemorates the death of the prophet's grandson Ḥusayn and other family members in the month of Muḥarram. She views these texts as "a constant in which its variable performative actualizations are contingent". To present her argument, she draws mainly upon the poems of Yaghmā Jandaqī (d. 1859) who is credited with having invented a specific poetic form ('dirges for breast-beating'). Elegies create a bond between performers and their audiences; Jandaqī's elegies further create a bond between the texts and the material performance of the

passion play on stage. His texts compose objects, props, and colours in conjunction with notions of space and time all of which refer to the staged commemorated events; they furthermore feature a palpable rhythmic quality which is achieved by a novel arrangement of the poetic elements within the verse. These techniques result in a mutual reinforcement of the elegies and the performance on stage and establish a close bond between the text and the human body through the text's perception of the material world, space, and time.

Sabine Dorpmüller analyses three dimensions of preaching: the devices of the preacher, its effect on his listeners and their response, and the evaluation by its observer who is both an insider and an outsider. The Andalusian traveller and adherent to the school of Mālikī law Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) describes several preaching events in his travelogue: a Friday prayer at the Great Mosque in Mecca, evening Ramadan sermons at the same place, and the famous preaching sessions of the Ḥanafī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī in Baghdad. Drawing on performance theory grounded in theatre studies and the notion of preaching as ethical entertainment, Dorpmüller focuses not only on the auditory sense but presents preaching as a multisensory event. Moreover, it is exactly his position as an outsider which allows Ibn Jubayr to focus in his descriptions on the event-character, without having to evaluate its religious appropriateness.

Susanne Enderwitz takes modern literature both as documentation and evaluation of religious practices. As the Arabic novel in Egypt set out with a nationalist agenda, the 'common people' and their culture played a decisive role in the authors' vision of a modern society. Analysing Egyptian authors writing in the 20th and early 21st century, and therefore spanning a period from early monarchy to the Mubarak regime, she especially highlights how the authors conceive Islam's role in society as it encounters and competes with other ideologies. Their portrayals of Islam as repetitive, lacking in intellectual pervasion, and full of myths display a notion of modernity which can also be traced in attitudes towards the craft's *risāla* (cf. Dağyeli) or in modern editors' comments on narratives about al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* (cf. Weinrich). Nevertheless, authors also viewed Islam as a potential basis for humanism. It was this view that came to an end as the gap between the profiteers and losers of the regimes widened and gave way to more extreme forms of religiosity and thereby considerably changed the fate of the novel's hero who is no longer able to fight the obstacles but embraces militant Islam.

Part three of the collection focuses on the negotiation of meanings, aesthetics, and identity. Jan Scholz and Max Stille analyse a ceremony at a shrine in the neighbourhood of Nizamuddin in New Delhi in 2010. Though carried out by the European and North American members of 'Universal Sufism', the ceremony nevertheless took place in the presence of and together with members of the local community and musicians from the tradition of North Indian Sufism. The movement of Universal Sufism, founded in the first half of the 20th century in the United States by the Indian-born Inayat Khan, has no adherents in India. For the

ceremony, its members brought their own rituals but also adopted elements from the North Indian Sufi tradition, thus creating a unique transcultural blend of ritual. For their analysis, the authors refer to Wolfgang Iser's theory of aesthetic response, notably his notion of 'gaps of indeterminacy', to explain the handling of unknown elements in the ceremony, like the musicians' performance or the recitation of Muslim prayers in Arabic or Urdu. In the same way that aesthetic texts 'initiate performances of meaning' (Iser), the participants fill in spots of indeterminacy according to their prior experiences. The perspective of the 'open ritual', the authors argue, is especially apt for the analysis of rituals performed by a New Religious Movement in a transcultural context.

The antagonism of two different approaches to text lies at the core of Paola Abenante's contribution. She studies the dynamics between Italian converts to Islam and the immigrant religious leaders in the Burhaniya Sufi order against the background of social hierarchies (education, economic status, religious prestige), which is reflected in attitudes towards ritual. Whereas the converts have read numerous books on Islam and are interested in discussing theosophical issues, the immigrant native speakers of Arabic who have access to the original texts but can barely communicate in Italian or English place more emphasis on the ritual embodiment of the text than its semantic meaning. The latter attitude becomes a means of both resistance and domination: by emphasizing the spiritual power of the sound of the performed texts, produced by the knowledge of prosodic rules and body techniques, over the scripturalist approach, thus emphasizing oral teaching over the written manifestation of text, the teacher places embodied capital over other forms of symbolic capital. The binary of the semantic/embodied text becomes essentialized and performative in the way that it guides behaviour and generates power relations.

Songül Karahasanoğlu focuses on the relation between religious movements, political and economic changes, and aesthetic language. Her article analyses the booming sector of Islamic popular music in Turkey (so-called 'Green Pop') which started in the late 1980s and has achieved enormous sales figures. She shows that the producers of Islamic popular music in Turkey have not created a new musical language but have used already existing musical styles. Islamic pop and its later sub-category of *zikir* pop (since the early 2000s) were conceived as a means to attract potential followers and, at times of immense political and economic change, also as an opposition habitus towards political and social currents. It was part of, and a contributor to, a new popular Islamic culture in parallel with developments in 'Islamic ways of everyday-life' like fashion or leisure behaviour. New religious developments create their own aesthetic dimension, she shows, but this does not necessarily have to be a new and unique one but may be based on borrowing. In the case of the new Islamic culture in Turkey, it is no longer the aesthetics of the traditional religious music rooted in Ottoman art and Sufi music; rather, Turkish popular music (thus including Arabesk and folk music) marks musical expression.

Further considerations

The core of the volume's contributions deals with ritually employed text – e.g. the *risāla*, *Burda*, elegies, sermons, prayers, or *dhikr* – and the narrative staging and valuation of text and ritual. The contributions illuminate important aspects of the study of religion and the role of texts therein, which may be summarized as follows:

Written texts are often perceived as a medium of storage, connected with functions of preservation, fixation, and cultural memory. Contributions in this volume have shown, however, that this is only partly the role of a text. Various points make this evident. For instance, significant information may be missing from the written form, as it has not been set down in writing. Such missing information may include instructions for performance in the widest sense, like bodily gestures or voice techniques, or parts which belong to a text's ritual framing, thus textual and non-textual elements which are constitutive for the oral delivery but transient. Therefore, a written text does not necessarily contain all information. Furthermore, written texts are not fixed or stable entities but may be altered. This altering may be a result of the adaptation of a text to the needs of a specific audience or a specific context. Alteration may also be the outcome of the performer's artistic creativity. Both issues, missing information and alteration, make the performed text distinctive from the written text and would uncouple a written text from characteristics such as stability or completeness.

As has been extensively discussed in studies on oral traditions[18], oral and written forms or texts are not mutually exclusive but often complementary, serving different functions. The examples in this volume show furthermore that texts are highly polyvalent, regarding both written and oral modes. Written forms may serve as a mode of authorization, a mode of preservation[19] and may also bear non-verbal communication acts. Oral forms are meant to agitate or recruit new adherents, they seek to be emotional experiences or fulfil educational purposes, or they are performed with a ritual function. A text's function is not exclusively bound to a specific form; we find for instance written *salāsil* as transmissions of blessings, non-verbal communication in written form and in performance, and the ritual efficacy of texts in both modes – for instance as amulet and orally performed. Therefore, a text may be powerful in its ritual efficacy, but this efficacy is not bound exclusively to a written or an oral form. Furthermore, the use of text is not bound to its semantics. In ritual, the primary function of language articula-

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18 See for instance the special volume on 'Performance Literature', *Oral Tradition* 20, 1 and 2 (2005).

19 It shall be noted that written preservation exists in different degrees: a text may be performed letter by letter, or a text is an *aide mémoire*, i.e. a 'pool' for possible realizations. These two poles are illustrated in this volume through the case of Sufi litanies (cf. Abenante) and the case of the *risāla* (cf. Dağyeli).

tion is often not to convey information but – besides its well-researched role as speech act – to create participation through collective engagement in recitation or singing or listening to its sounds.

Finally, various forms of religious practise for which no underlying texts exist are vital for the everyday life of believers.[20] Contemporary *ziyāra* practices are connected to a number of objects and actions whose meaning in many cases is not explicitly stated. Moreover, in some cases the rituals performed may be volatile, as the examples of spontaneously performed acts or the individual combination of appropriate rites at a pilgrimage site demonstrate. Also, the material quality, both natural and architectural, of pilgrimage sites clearly invites related actions during *ziyāra*.[21] The case studies from Syria show that the idea of the presence of *baraka* is not tied to a place or person *per se*. Rather, it is tied to the related *stories* about them. *baraka* is not the inherent quality of a place or a person as such but the result of the relationship between a place and its 'owner' (*ṣāḥib*) and of the relation between acts carried out there and in everyday life. The transmission of *baraka* may take on quite different forms of material quality. Incorporating *baraka* through direct physical contact with the imbued object is one of the most common forms. Besides this, Sufi masters have been seen as sources of blessing. Transmission through direct contact and teaching has been marked throughout history by performative acts such as the bestowal of a formal licence (*ijāza*) or garment (*khirqa*). However, for the historical period investigated in this volume, the written form of chains of transmission seems to gain a quality of its own, too. The function of such written chains as bearers of *baraka* is reflected in the material form of textual arrangement, here the parallels to prophetic traditions. These relations between textual materials and extra-textual practices and notions shall make us reconsider the above-mentioned attributes assigned to written texts.

In turn, our study of texts in religious practice should be based on an expanded understanding of text beyond its function as a storage of information: 'text' is not limited to the written form but may also refer to the text of a recitation or an oral performance. Such a performance may partly draw on a written source and may be partly constituted during performance.[22] The function of text does not necessarily

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20 This does not mean that no written texts or directives exist at all; in the case of local pilgrimage, for instance, we know of hagiographies of the respective venerated persons or of pilgrimage handbooks. But these written sources do not necessarily constitute the basis of present-day practice, at least not directly. In the search for textual material, the various prayers which are sometimes dedicated to a pilgrimage site and may be kept there as a poster or booklet would be of greater relevance.

21 For instance the formations of caves or tombs, the natural existence of water, stones, etc. prompt ablution rites or circumambulations.

22 There are various degrees of the relation between oral and written text which cannot be discussed in detail here; it is noted only that not every performance is created anew or without any written backup, as was assumed during the first phase of the study of oral traditions (cf. Finnegan, "The How of Literature", 168).

depend on its semantics: a text may be ritually valid and effective without semantic meaning.[23] Furthermore, the composition of texts is not only shaped by considerations concerning the conveying of information but by the fact that some composed texts are 'oral texts' in their use of rhetorical devices which create a specific structure of sound and rhythm in order to produce a palpable effect on the body.

Framing operates as an important element on various levels: for religious actions and events, like a pilgrimage or a sermon; for the delivery of text, e.g. through prayer formulas; and as a technique for communicating the efficacy of a text, for instance by embedding it in salvation narratives. Furthermore, the delivery and reception of text take other factors into account than contents, like contexts and actions, in parallel with one current notion of material religion: "Belief […] is not merely discursive assent to a proposition or teaching, but the entire body of human activities that makes a force, an event, or a place sacred."[24] We find the use of the body and the senses figuring at the core of preaching, praying[25], reciting, and listening to the Qur'an. The auditory experience of text through the listening to recitation and preaching or collective reciting and singing features prominently in most of the described case studies in this volume. But visual, olfactory, haptic and taste experiences are present during many events as well: Ibn Jubayr elaborately describes the extraordinary amount of light on Ramadan nights and the sight of fruit and sweets; the members of the Burhaniya Sufi order burn incense; and feasting and listening to the *risāla* is reported to occur together. Touching and smelling belong to the rites of local pilgrimage; some rites even include swallowing and drinking (although the taste experience would not feature as the centre of this action). The preacher Ibn al-Jawzi stroked the heads of the penitents with his hands while praying for them, Ibn Jubayr reports; and various gestures and postures accompany the prayers and recitations during the ceremonies of Universal Sufism.

It is at the interplay of text and doing that participation is created which goes beyond an intellectual reading, listening, and understanding of religious propositions. Although quite heterogeneous, dealing as they do with different parts of the world and historic periods, the contributions to this volume comprehensively capture the diverse elements of what constitutes belief and how it is mediated. They embrace the different aspects of studying religion beyond the assessment of texts as an information medium.

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23 Semantics shift, then, to a different level. For further considerations of this aspect, particularly in the Hindu context, see Annette Wilke, "Text, Klang und Ritual. Plädoyer für eine Religionswissenschaft als Kulturhermeneutik", in: *Religionswissenschaft*, Michael Stausberg, ed., Berlin: de Gruyter 2012, 407-420.

24 Morgan, "Materiality", 73.

25 See also Katz, *Prayer*, especially 62-70 on the cultivation of emotions in the context of prayer.

Part I
Objects, Actions, and Notions in the Context of Blessing

Antique Phallic Symbol or Mobile Relic? Remarks on the Cult of the *quba*ᶜ in Ḥaḍramawt

Marianus Hundhammer

The veneration of saints in the Islamic world has always been an object of interest in the history of Islamic studies. From the beginnings of research in the field to the phase of colonially biased orientalist studies to contemporary theoretical debates, these practices were and still are a recurrent subject. Scholars can thus draw on a large corpus of historical sources as well as on secondary literature.

The case of the *quba*ᶜ, the central cult object of the annual pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) to Qabr Hūd (the tomb of the prophet Hūd) in eastern Ḥaḍramawt is different.[1] Despite the importance and popularity of the cult, the scholarly sources on it are few and contradictory. This article compares these sources with the results of a field study which I conducted during the pilgrimage in 2008.

Based on these research findings, it is possible to analyse this specific cult object and its usage in detail. In this analysis, the question of whether the *quba*ᶜ can be characterized as an antique phallic symbol or a mobile relic will be central. First, the form and function of the *quba*ᶜ in its contemporary usage will be described and then analysed against its scholarly historical and religious background. In the following, the interpretation of the *quba*ᶜ as a relic of an antique phallic cult as well as its role within the context of antique South Arabian astral religion shall be discussed in the light of these research results. A second section will focus on an alternative interpretation of the *quba*ᶜ as a construction made for the transportation and protection of the relics of saints. To that end, a textual source from the 17th century will be considered in order to characterize the continuity of these rites. Given the weak body of source material, this reading will be supported by an etymological analysis of the root q-b-ᶜ in Arabic lexicography.

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[1] To my knowledge, the following works represent the complete body of research on the *ziyāra* to Qabr Hūd, which, with a total of 20,000 participants, constitutes the greatest pilgrimage in South Arabia: Jean-François Breton, "Le tombeau de Hūd", *Saba* 3-4 (1997), 79-83; Nahida Coussonnet, "Le pèlerinage au sanctuaire de Hūd, le prophéte de Dieu", *Saba* 3-4 (1997), 73-79; Marianus Hundhammer, *Prophetenverehrung im Ḥaḍramaut. Die Ziyāra nach Qabr Hūd aus diachroner und synchroner Perspektive*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz 2010; François de Keroualin et al., "Hūd, un Pèlerinage en Hadramaout", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 13 (1995), 181-189; Lynne Newton, *A Landscape of Pilgrimage and Trade in Wadi Masila, Yemen: Al-Qisha and Qabr Hud in the Islamic Period*, Oxford: Archaeopress 2009; ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ṣabbān, *Ziyārāt wa-ʿādāt. Ziyārat nabi llāh Hūd*, ed. and transl. Linda Boxberger et al., Ardmore: Institute for Yemeni Studies, 1998; Robert Bertram Serjeant, "Hūd and other pre-Islamic prophets", *Le Muséon* 67 (1954), 121-179.

Form and function of the quba^{c}

The *quba^{c}* consists of the *jarīda*, a stick, measuring up to two metres in height, which is normally made from the leaves of the date palm (in some cases of bamboo) and a conically tapered, approximately one-metre-long sack, the mouth of which is attached to the *jarīda*.[2] This sack contains the clothing of deceased saints (*awliyā'*, sg. *walī*, lit. "someone close to God") or their remains.[3]

Before the pilgrimage can start, the *quba^{c}* is uncovered by the pilgrim group's religious leader, the *manṣab*. At dawn, the *manṣab* enters the grave of the local saint (*walī*), escorted by a procession which is accompanied by drummers. In a solemn procedure which takes place in the sepulchre, the saint's clothes or rags are stuffed into the sack, which is attached, upright, to the top end of the *jarīda*. Following this, the *quba^{c}*, containing the relics, is carried by a specially authorized bearer who leads the pilgrim group. During the pilgrimage the *quba^{c}* is repeatedly brought into physical contact with holy places or persons. The believers' most notable practice relating to the *quba^{c}* throughout the entire pilgrimage is to touch the cult object as often and for as long as possible. In this regard, touching the sack is prioritized over touching the stick. As the results of the field study show, this practice is performed in general as well as in the context of different rituals on this pilgrimage.[4]

The quba^{c} *as a relic of Antique South Arabian cults*

The question of the *quba^{c}'s* pre-Islamic origins has been largely neglected by scholars, not least because such a question was and still is a taboo in the traditional discourse of Muslim scholarship. In western oriental studies, the religio-historical approach has led to the interpretation of the *quba^{c}* as an antique phallic symbol.[5]

The discussion about the antique religious veneration of male (and female) genitals is not restricted to South Arabia, but for the northern and western Semitic cultural areas it is based entirely on hypothetical grounds.[6] Various sources

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2 Serjeant, "Hūd", 137. See Plates, figure 1, 251.

3 On the veneration of *awliyā'* in Ḥaḍramawt see Alexander Knysh, "The cult of saints in Ḥaḍramaut", *New Arabian Studies* 1 (1993), 137-152.

4 See Plates, figure 2, 251.

5 This assumption was a result of the research conducted by the British professor of Arabic Studies Robert Bertram Serjeant in Ḥaḍramawt in 1954. In this year, as a consequence of clan feuds, the *ziyāra* to Qabr Hūd was called off, meaning that Serjeant could not analyse the cult of the *quba^{c}* by means of fieldwork. See Serjeant, "Hūd", 137 f.

6 See Robert A. Campbell, *Phallic Worship*, London: Kegan Paul, 2004, 121-193; Detlev Fehling, *Ethologische Überlegungen auf dem Gebiet der Altertumskunde. Phallische Demonstration, Fernsicht, Steinigung*, Munich: Beck 1974, 7-14; Alain Daniélou, *Der Phallus. Metapher des Lebens, Quelle des Glücks – Symbole und Riten in Geschichte und Kunst*, Munich: Diederichs 1998,

refer consistently to transregionally occurring erected rock-monoliths. From a religio-historical perspective, it seems plausible to associate these monoliths with cultic acts.[7] Generally these cultic acts tend to be contextualized either within the veneration of astral deities or of ancestors.[8] In the relevant literature, the veneration of phalli in antique Arabia is mentioned in a few cases.[9] To my knowledge, only one source discusses this topic in relation to South Arabia, and in this instance the cult object differs fundamentally from the *quba*ᶜ.[10] For Ḥaḍramawt, more concrete indications of a cultic veneration of phalli were to be found in the epigraphic inscriptions dedicated to the Old South Arabian goddess Dhāt Ḥimyam. In these inscriptions, the frequently occurring Old South Arabic ḥaḍramitic term bḥt was, for a long time, translated as "votive phallus".[11]

Unfortunately, as the numerous instances in the context of oriental studies testify, these assumptions were uncritically reproduced[12] until the Semitist Alexander Sima drew attention to the weakness of this hypothesis. Whilst he questioned the term's etymological derivation[13], he also argued that there are no archaeological findings of such phallic cult objects – a surprising fact considering the epigraphical evidence in over 200 cases.[14]

53-121; Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, *Bible Studies: Essays on Phallic Worship and other Curious Rites and Customs*, London: Progressive Publishing Company 1892, 1-28; Eugene Monick, *Die Wurzeln der Männlichkeit*, Munich: Kösel 1990, 13-35; Jacques Marcireau, *Le culte du phallus*, Nizza: Editions Alain Lefeuvre 1979, 66-192.

7 See Rémy Audouin, "Première prospection archéologique", *Saba* 3-4 (1997), 37; Joseph Henninger, *Arabia sacra. Aufsätze zur Religionsgeschichte Arabiens und seiner Randgebiete*, Fribourg: Universitätsverlag 1981, 237; Gonzague Ryckmans, "Rites et croyances préislamiques en arabie meridionale", *Le Muséon* 55 (1942), 165-176; Julius Wellhausen: *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, Berlin: De Gruyter 1897, 105-108.

8 Ignaz Goldziher: *Muhammedanische Studien* [1888-1890], Reprint Hildesheim: Olms 1961, 233 ff.

9 See Jacques Antoine Dulaure, *Die Zeugung in Glauben, Sitten und Bräuchen der Völker*, Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft 1909, 35-42; Jutta Gassner, *Phallos. Fruchtbarkeitssymbol oder Abwehrzauber? Ein ethnologischer Beitrag zu humanethologischen Überlegungen der apotropäischen Bedeutung phallischer und ithyphallischer Darstellungen*, Vienna: Böhlau 1993, 74 f., 110-116.

10 Gassner mentions replications of phalli that are built of milk and sand in the region of Lahaj (Southern Yemen). In a local ritual, sacrifices are offered to these statues. Gassner, *Phallos*, 116, n. 309.

11 Serguei Frantsouzoff, "The Inscriptions from the Temples of Dhat Ḥimyam at Raybūn", *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 25 (1995), 16-18.

12 This tendency is probably best represented by the research on the *kallačča*, an object worn on the forehead by certain dignitaries among peoples in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. Drawing on an initial interpretation of the object as a phallus in the 1920s, subsequent generations of scientists uncritically adopted this thesis. See Hermann Amborn, "The Phallsification of the Kallačča: or, Why Sometimes a Cigar is a Cigar", in: *Proceedings of the 16th Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Svein Ege et al., eds, Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology 2009, 395-407.

13 Alexander Sima: *Tiere, Pflanzen, Steine und Metalle in den altsüdarabischen Inschriften. Eine lexikalische und realienkundliche Untersuchung*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2000, 289 f.

14 The only object that is associated with the term *bḥt* is a rudimentary cone made of clay. See Frantsouzoff, "Inscriptions", Table 2.

The Semitist Anne Multhoff pursued this question further. Her recent research has led her to the discovery that all inscribed dedications of bḥt were attached to stone slabs. On the basis of this discovery, she concludes that the term could refer to the inscription itself, but that there is no valid evidence that bḥt actually means phallus.[15]

The British Arabist Robert Bertram Serjeant interpreted the *quba*ᶜ as a possible mobile god symbol that has survived into present-day Islam. A closer look exposes certain flaws in this reading, especially when we consider that Serjeant's assumptions rely on the comparison of the *quba*ᶜ with just one other cult object, the *bayraq*. This stick, bearing a tin crescent with small bells attached to the top end, was in use in Western Ḥaḍramawt until the 1950s.[16] The *bayraq*, if anything, could theoretically belong to one of the astral cults of the Old South Arabians. In my opinion, the *bayraq* and *quba*ᶜ have nothing in common other than their use of a stick.

The quba^{ᶜ} *as a relic of popular Islam*

In contrast to the interpretation of the *quba*ᶜ as a relic of antique South Arabian cults, a consideration of the cultic acts connected with the *quba*ᶜ brings to light a correlation with the *baraka* cult in popular Islam. To translate *baraka* as "blessing" or "power of blessing" would be a false simplification which fails to capture the term's metaphysical meaning. In the Muslim imagination, the *baraka* represents a substance which can occur in different forms, and which pilgrims aim to embody. This action, as well as the visiting of sites in order to receive *baraka* is called *tabarruk*.[17]

In general, *baraka* occurs in three different forms: *baraka* of persons, of objects or of special topographical sites such as fountains or rocks.[18] In the context of the pilgrimage to the grave of the prophet Hūd, these three forms of *baraka* should not be seen as separate. Findings from the research conducted in 2008 show that through the pilgrims' religious practice, the different forms of *baraka* were partly combined in order to potentiate their benevolent effects.

The role of Muslim saints (*awliyāʾ*) as bearers of *baraka* in Ḥaḍramawt has, in comparison to popular Islam in general, a crucial function in this cult. The spe-

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15 Anne Multhoff, "Phalluskult und Bilderverbot? Beiträge zur ḥaḍramitischen Sprache und Kultur", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 160 (2010), 7-40.

16 Serjeant, "Hūd", 137.

17 See Joseph Chelhod, "La baraka chez les Arabes ou l'influence bienfaisante du sacré", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 148 (1955), 68-88. See also the contribution by Fartacek and Nigst in this volume.

18 See Gebhard Fartacek, *Pilgerstätten in der syrischen Peripherie*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2003, 171.

cial spiritual function of the saints in the cult of the *qubaʿ* requires closer examination from the perspectives of Religious and Islamic Studies.

The most important population group that takes part in the *ziyāra* to Qabr Hūd is represented by the *sāda*, descendants of the prophet Muḥammad. The number of saints in this socio-religious class is higher than in any other population group in the region. In the context of the field study conducted in 2008 I was able to determine that the cult of the *qubaʿ* is practised exclusively in this population group.

The ḥaḍramī social order and its respective pilgrimage customs constitute a special position in the Islamic world. In contrast to many other Islamic societies, in Ḥaḍramawt a system of strictly determined social strata has prevailed for more than a thousand years.[19] In general, five social strata can be distinguished, whereby each single stratum can be further divided into several subgroups on a regional and local level. The five main groups are the *sāda* (sg. *sayyid*), *mashāyikh* (sg. *shaykh*), *qabāʾil* (sg. *qabīl*), *masākin* (sg. *miskīn*) and *ʿabīd* (sg. *ʿabd*). In this system the *sāda* constitute the most important and most powerful group, whereas the *ʿabīd* represent the weakest social stratum. Interestingly, this social order originates from events that date back to the turn of the first millennium. There is evidence which suggests that the *mashāyikh* originally represented the most powerful elite in the pre-Islamic tribal society of Ḥaḍramawt.

Historical background of the cult of baraka *in Ḥaḍramawt*

It seems probable that this supremacy continued after the Islamization of Ḥaḍramawt. The loss of power of the *mashāyikh*, although only a few sources provide evidence of this, is likely to have taken place in a process that started in the 10th century. This process correlated with the migration of *sāda* from northern Arabia to Ḥaḍramawt, which is closely linked to the Basrian Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Muhājir (d. 956 CE). Even though the current state of research prevents us from identifying the religious, social and political reasons for this migration, it is probable that the beginning of the exodus of Iraqi *sāda* started in 951, when al-Muhājir settled with a group of Basrian families in Ḥaḍramawt.[20]

Not much is known about the societal consequences of this migratory movement for the following centuries. Nevertheless, the *sāda*'s claim to a position at the top of the social hierarchy of Ḥaḍramawt on religious grounds (i.e. their status as

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19 On the hierarchy in ḥaḍramī society, see Abdalla S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, Oxford: Clarendon 1970, 13ff.; Sylvaine Camelin, "Reflections on the system of social stratification in Hadhramaut", in: *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s*, Ulrike Freitag et al., eds, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 147-156; Joseph Chelhod, "L'organisation sociale au Yémen", *L'Ethnographie* 64 (1970), 61-86; Friedhelm Hartwig, *Hadramaut und das indische Fürstentum von Hyderabad*, Würzburg: Ergon 2000, 30 f.

20 See Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, *Die Çufiten in Süd-Arabien im XI. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen: Dieterich 1883, 2 ff.; Coussonnet, "Le pèlerinage", 76.

descendants of the prophet Muḥammad) supports the conclusion that the *sāda* and *mashāyikh* were competing for political and social prevalence. The groups of the *qabāʾil*, *masākin* and *ʿabīd*, as well as the aforementioned subdivisions of these strata, are extraneous to our question since the cult of the *qubaʿ* is only to be found among the *sāda*.

Thus, the framework for the analysis of the cult of the *qubaʿ* can be set using regional, societal and religious criteria. Furthermore, Iraq, or more precisely the region of the city of Basra in the 10th century, can be identified as a possible reference point for the examination of the *baraka* practices which I observed in 2008. Yet it is actually technical developments that have played a decisive role for the pilgrimage in the recent past. For decades, the pilgrimage route between the city of Tarīm and the final destination Qabr Hūd was only passable by off-road vehicles, or, traditionally, by pack animals or on foot. In spring 2008, a few months before I started to collect field data, an asphalt road that leads directly into the village of Qabr Hūd was completed. Since this road does not run through the wadi itself, but mostly along the lower side of the Jōl,[21] important pilgrimage stations, where cultic acts were performed for centuries, are no longer visited. Nowadays the believers travel straight to the prophet's grave.

In the second half of the last century, these pilgrimage sites still fulfilled important functions in the course of the religious year. The pilgrimage ceremonies at Qabr Hūd take place between the 11th and the 15th of the Islamic month of Shaʿbān. For this reason, depending on their point of departure, the participants started their religious journey in their hometowns between the end of Rajab and the beginning of Shaʿbān, and visited several sites on the way, where they performed a number of rituals.[22] As time passed, these customs gradually died out because, as technology developed, pilgrims became less dependent on travelling by foot and therefore on local water and food supplies. Nowadays, the degree of mobility even allows a considerable reduction in the duration of the pilgrimage, which is the reason why ʿAynāt, the ancestral seat of the Āl Abū Bakr b. Sālim, is the last commonly visited holy site between Tarīm and Qabr Hūd.

Conditions of the field study and methodological consequences

In order to document these local customs, it was of great importance for me to conduct the field study with the pilgrim group of the Abū Bakr b. Sālim. Only in this way was it possible to analyse the cultic acts related to the *qubaʿ* from the beginning until the end of the pilgrimage. In terms of methodology, it was already apparent in the planning phase that a quantitative analysis approach was not feasible due to the pilgrims' being constantly on the move and the lack of

21 Jōl is one branch of the wadi.

22 For a detailed description of these customs see Serjeant, "Hūd", 135-151.

technical infrastructure in Qabr Hūd. For this reason, a qualitative research approach was chosen, and in the spring of 2008, I was able to conduct pre-test interviews with members of the Āl Abū Bakr b. Sālim prior to the field study.

Unfortunately, the results of these interviews, which concentrated on the manners and customs of the pilgrims and therefore mainly on religious topics, were barely evaluable. Even though I was accepted as a researcher by the government as well as by the religious leader of the Abū Bakr b. Sālim, *manṣab* Ḥasan Aḥmad, the interview partners were highly suspicious of the interviewer and the interview situation, particularly regarding the technical recording. As soon as the 'official' interview ended and the documentation equipment was switched off, the participants struck up conversations and even longer discussions, especially concerning religious questions.

In addition to these experiences, I noticed an obvious influence of the research and interview situation on myself, especially when questions concerning the religiosity of my interview partners did not lead to answers, but to counter questions regarding my own religion and beliefs, and sometimes even to an invitation to join Islam. To sum it up, the method that I was aiming at was not applicable under the conditions of the observer's paradox. Eventually, I conducted the qualitative interviews without recording them and documented the data after the conversations by writing reports based on memory. Unfortunately, this method was fraught with problems, as is to be shown in the case of the cult of the *qubaʿ*.

Although my social status as a guest of *manṣab* Ḥasan Aḥmad Abū Bakr b. Sālim enabled me to document the cult of the *qubaʿ* from the beginning of the pilgrimage in ʿAynāt to the end in Qabr Hūd through photographs, film and audio recordings, it proved to be very difficult to get information on the *qubaʿ* from the pilgrims themselves. The refusal of the informants to write down the correct word for the *qubaʿ* as well as their significant reluctance to talk about the object and its function in general were clear evidence of the taboo nature of such acts. Obviously, their behaviour was influenced to a great extent by the research situation of a non-Muslim European interacting with deeply devout ḥaḍramī Muslims.

Nevertheless, their refusal to write down the term *qubaʿ* in particular seemed to be more the result of a specific religious restraint than a general behaviour towards non-Muslims during the pilgrimage. Even though I was not able to collect reliable data on this question, it seems conceivable to me that an individual's social status within the pilgrim group is connected to the question of whether he is allowed to possess or give written or verbal information and how much.[23] Ulti-

[23] An example in this regard is the separation of the socio-religious strata *ʿuqqāl* (or *ʿāqil*) and *juhhāl* (or *jāhil*) in Druze society (and other similar structures in religious communities such as the Yazdi). In this hierarchy, religious knowledge is exclusively reserved for the *ʿuqqāl* (lit. "the wise"), and concealed from the *juhhāl* (lit. "the ignorant"). Consequently, the latter are mainly excluded from verbal and written sources concerning their own beliefs. See Nissim Dana, *The Druze in the Middle East: Their Faith, Leadership, Identity and*

mately, these research conditions enabled me to accurately document and analyse the form and function of the *qubaʿ*, but the related narratives on the cult object were, by contrast, not revealed by the informants, and I had to rely on the few written sources that were available to me.

Historical background of the term qubaʿ

To my knowledge, the only historical source on the topic is the travel account of a virtually unknown Moroccan author: the *Riḥlat Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī. Min al-Maghrib ilā al-Ḥaḍramawt* by Yūsuf Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī (d. 1638).[24] In this work, the writer reports that he and his son ʿUmar travelled in Ḥaḍramawt. As he points out, he appears also to have been a relative of the clan of the Abū Bakr b. Sālim.[25]

Most notably, he describes a religious practice of his time which corresponds precisely with our object of study. His description resembles rites that are still practised nowadays, because in both cases the clothing of the deceased *awliyāʾ* plays a decisive role:

> "Albasanī khirqatahu llatī fawqa raʾsihi wa-huwa al-qubaʿ al-maʿrūf wa-ajazanī maʿa al-qubaʿ ijāzatan wa-naṣabanī shaykhan."[26]
>
> "He wrapped me up in his rag, which was on top of his head, this being the well-known *qubaʿ*, and with the *qubaʿ*, he gave me permission (to teach) and appointed me *shaykh*."

Two points of information here are of value for the topic of the cult of the *qubaʿ*. The more general is Ibn ʿĀbid's depiction of the bestowal of permission (to teach) on a specific person, which is connected to the cult of a local *walī*. The sacred character of this act rests on the physical contact of the candidate with the rag of cloth belonging to the departed saint. The incorporation of the *baraka* of the ancestor can be identified as the core element of a scholar's spiritual inauguration. More significant, however, is Ibn ʿĀbid's revelation that the rag itself is described as *qubaʿ*. This implies that the *jarīda* and the sack are not part of the *qubaʿ*, and therefore have no ritualistic, but only technical functions.

According to the current body of research, Arabic travelogues from the classical period of Arabic literature certainly need to be examined for their authenticity. In the case of Qabr Hūd, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, perhaps the most popular author of this genre, tellingly locates the grave of the prophet at a site on the coast of the

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Status, Brighton: Sussex Academic Press 2003, 20-24; Heinz Halm, *Die Schia*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1988, 219-224.

24 None of the relevant works by either Muslim or western scholars contain any information on this author. Only the preface of the book contains a few biographical notes. See Yūsuf Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī, *Riḥlat Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī. Min al-Maghrib ilā al-Ḥaḍramawt*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī et al., Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān 1991.

25 Ibn ʿĀbid, *Riḥlat*, 118.

26 Ibn ʿĀbid, *Riḥlat*, 107.

Arabian Sea, several hundred kilometres away from the actual sanctuary.[27] However, in the case of Ibn ʿĀbid his detailed knowledge of customs and historical figures indicate a relatively high level of authenticity.

Furthermore, the source is of value on the question of the semantics and morphology of the term *qubaʿ*. As previously mentioned, the pilgrims generally refused to write down the word *qubaʿ*, while grammatical information on the term, such as its gender and number or long vowels, if provided at all, varied widely. In the case of the term's semantics, I was barely able to get any leads at all. Based on field data, only the vocalization of the first syllable with *ḍamma* and the second syllable with *fatḥa* can be considered as verified. The non-vocalized form with two short vowels, as it occurs in Ibn ʿĀbid's text, is not a reliable reference point due to the lack of any other written sources that would verify it.

Considering the rather insufficient body of source material, a lexical and etymological analysis seems to be inevitable. Nevertheless, I make no claim to be comprehensive on this matter. The task of analysing the three radicals q-b-ʿ not only in Classical Arabic, but also in all relevant Arabic dialects as well as plausible Semitic sister languages,[28] would require a separate research project. For this reason, only identical denotations which are to be found in different sources were taken into account.[29] Furthermore, connotations were chosen selectively based on their potential semantic coherences with the sacred object, its form and its ritual function.

Remarks on the etymology of the term qubaʿ

An examination of the spelling and vocalization of the term *qubaʿ* in the text by Ibn ʿĀbid produces no applicable results concerning the appearance and use of the cult object.[30] The situation is different in the case of the *media geminatae*

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27 Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *The Travels*, 5 vols, ed. Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb et al., Cambridge: University Press 1958-2000, vol. 2, 203.

28 A brief overview of the relevant literature did not produce any further results. See A. F. L. Beeston et al., *Dictionnaire sabéen (anglais-français-arabe)*, Beirut: Librairie du Liban/Éditions Peeters, Louvain-la-Neuve 1982, 102; Joan C. Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic, Sabaean Dialect*, Chico: Scholars Press 1982, s.v. Q-B-ʿ; Ibrahim al-Selwi, *Jemenitische Wörter in den Werken von al-Hamdānī und Našwān und ihre Parallelen in den semitischen Sprachen*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer 1987, 175; Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch*, 17th ed., Berlin: Springer 1954; 336; Yaʿqūb Mannā, *Qāmūs kaldānī-ʿarabī*, Beirut: Babel Center Publications 1975, 655.

29 The following variations were only considered in cases where the meaning was relevant: the vocalization of the second syllable with *sukūn* (because pharyngeal consonants in a final position in Arabic are usually not spoken completely without a vowel sound), and in addition all possible variations of the Arabic root q-b-ʿ with a long vowel ū (first syllable) and a long vowel ā (second syllable).

30 *Qubaʿ* is a rare Arabic word for hedgehog. See Luwīs Maʿlūf, *al-Munjid fi l-lugha*, 27th ed., Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq 1987, 606; Adolf Wahrmund, *Handwörterbuch der arabischen und*

feminine form *qubbaʿa*. Mostly, it is translated as "hat".[31] However, this denotation is probably a phenomenon of Modern Standard Arabic. In older dictionaries such as Muḥammad Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿarab*, this explanation for the morpheme is missing.[32] It is likely that the reason for this discrepancy lies in the relatively late lexicalization of the term.

An important piece of evidence is to be found in Reinhart Dozy's *Dictionnaire detaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes*, published in 1843.[33] With regard to the respective lemma, he remarks: "je n'ai pu l'admettre dans le texte, parce que jusqu'au présent, je ne l'ai pas rencontré dans un auteur arabe, et que je doute qu'effectivement les arabes aient porté cette coiffure."[34] The comparison of these sources supports, hypothetically at least, the conclusion that *qubbaʿa* in the sense of "hat" was not lexicalized until the 19th century. Therefore, the applicability of this meaning for the cult object seems questionable.

In the following, the same feminine form, but without duplication of the middle root consonant, *qubaʿa*, shall be analysed. In this case, there is much less consensus among lexicographers than in the preceding example.[35] Interesting material is to be found in the *Lisān al-ʿarab* and other sources which describe *qubaʿa* as a "rag like the burnus".[36] Contextualizing this specification within the description of the religious ritual in Ibn ʿĀbid's travelogue, it seems conceivable that the relics themselves are called *qubaʿa*, a kind of headgear containing *baraka*, ritually used in religious customs. Consequently, the sack and stick would not be part of the *qubaʿa*, but a means of protection and transport.

Another line of argumentation can be gleaned from the phrasing "jāriya qubaʿa ṭulaʿa" in the *Lisān al-ʿarab* and other texts.[37] It is explained that a girl (*jāriya*)

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deutschen Sprache, 2 vols, Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt 1970, vol. 2, 454; Albert de Biberstein-Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, 2 vols, Paris: Barrois 1860, vol. 2, 663; Georg Wilhelm Freytag, *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum*, 4 vols, Beirut: Librairie du Liban 1975, vol. 3, 392.

31 Hans Wehr, *Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart*, 5th ed., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1985, 659; Maʿlūf, *Munjid*, 606; Aḥmad Ibn Fāris Ibn Zakarīyā, *Muʿjam maqāyis al-lugha*, 6 vols, Qum: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya 1984, vol. 4, 51.

32 Muḥammad Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 18 vols, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-tawfiqiyya, n.d., vol. 11, 14-16.

33 Reinhart Pieter Anne Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes*, Amsterdam: Müller 1843.

34 Dozy, *Dictionnaire*, 347, n. 2.

35 In Dozy's *Supplément aux Dictionnaires arabes*, we find the meaning "helmet", but with only one textual reference. See Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires arabes*, Amsterdam: Müller 1845, 63.

36 "al-Qubaʿa: khirqatun tukhāṭ ka-l-burnus yalbasuhā al-ṣubyān". Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 11, 15. See as well the correlating meaning "hood" in Wahrmund, *Handwörterbuch*, 454 and de Biberstein-Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, 664.

37 "Taṭallaʿu thumma taqbaʿu raʾsahā ay tudkhiluhu, wa-qīl: taṭluʿu marratan wa-taqbaʿu ukhrā". Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 11, 15. The meaning "to duck one's head" is also associated with the zoological term *qubaʿ* (see n. 30).

"looks out" and "then ducks her head, and one says: Once she appears and once she ducks (her head)". The same line of reasoning is followed by Georg Wilhelm Freytag, who concretizes the ducking of the head as "hiding",[38] a conclusion that is to be found in other dictionaries, too.[39] This interpretation would suggest that the *qubaʿa* should be translated participially as "hiding", and in a nominalized undetermined form as "a hiding one".

With respect to the ritual function of the cult object, this semantic relation seems probable, not least because it describes what happens at the beginning of the pilgrimage: relics are removed from the grave of the ancestral *walī* and put into the sack. All this is closed to the public and even the 'common' pilgrims of the group. Only a few dignitaries are able to see the relics in the grave before they are 'hidden' inside the sack for the entire pilgrimage until their return to the sepulchre. Following this interpretation, a conclusion can be drawn about which part of the cult object is referred to by the term *qubaʿ*: The subject that "hides" can only be the sack that contains the actual objects, the relics. In addition, the function of the stick indicates transportation rather than concealment.

This contextualization also seems to correlate with the practices performed during the *ziyāra*. The incorporation of *baraka* can take place through contact with the sack alone, without the sacred objects inside, which are the actual bearers of *baraka*, being touched. In this manner, the content of the *qubaʿ*, which is said to consist of prayer caps or the cloth rags of the departed *awliyāʾ*, is not only protected from theft and damage through frequent touching, but also from criticism about its authenticity. As already mentioned, within the scope of this article it is not possible to present an extensive investigation into the term *qubaʿ*, but only general considerations on semantics and etymology. Future research may lead to further results.[40]

Form follows function or function follows form? Preliminary conclusions

In due consideration of the material discussed in this article, a correlation between the *qubaʿ* and the associated cultic practice and antique Old South Arabian customs remains elusive. In particular, there are no indications of a phallic cult surviving into current popular Islam in Ḥaḍramawt except for the roughly phallic form of the object. Epigraphic Old South Arabic ḥaḍramitic texts that were classi-

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38 "Mulier modo recondens modo ostendens faciem". Freytag, *Lexicon*, 392.

39 Aḥmad Ibn Fāris Ibn Zakarīyā writes in the *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lugha*: "wa-jāriya qubaʿa ṭulaʿa: idhā takhabbaʾat tāratan wa-taṭallaʿat tāratan." The author seems to have avoided the verbal form of the root q-b-ʿ, in order to concretize the meaning with Form V of the root kh-b-ʾ. Ibn Fāris, *Muʿjam*, 51. See also de Biberstein-Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, 664.

40 Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the form *qubāʿ* means "measure of capacity for grain", and, interestingly, is of Basrian origin. See Freytag, *Lexikon*, 392; Maʿlūf, *Munjid*, 606; Dozy, *Supplément*, 303; Ibn Fāris, *Muʿjam*, 51.

fied as evidence for the use of phallic votives in a religious context have been fundamentally contested in recent research.

In fact, historical and etymological evidence point to the context of local ḥaḍrami *baraka*-cults within a wider framework of the veneration of saints. Nevertheless, this article only presents initial assumptions. In addition, the hypothesis that the practices around the *quba*ᶜ are a part of popular *baraka* faith raises new questions. One core question in this regard, namely the issue of which part of the object is referred to in the term, will not finally be answered without further field studies.

According to the reflections presented in this article, it is most unlikely that *quba*ᶜ refers to the stick, the sack, and its contents. It was this interpretation that is exclusively based on the outer appearance of the object, which in turn forms the main precondition for the "Phallus thesis". The question of whether the term *quba*ᶜ describes either the sack or the sacred contents of the object must be left open pending the results of future research. However, it was proven that the stick was never more than a means of transportation. As shown with regard to the *ziyāra* to Qabr Hūd, transport and protection seem to be the most important factors.

Shared Rituals through *ziyārāt* in Lebanon: A Typology of Christian and Muslim Practices*

Nour Farra-Haddad

In Lebanon, oratories, chapels, monasteries, mosques, *maqāms* and *mazārs*[1] testify to the importance of the worship of Christian and Muslim saints in local culture. Members of different religions and different religious communities have long lived and intermingled here and the history of this country is characterized by such contacts and borrowings. The theme of shared shrines has recently been seriously explored by anthropologists, in the Mediterranean region in particular by Dionigi Albera.[2] Shrines that attract the devotions of both Muslims and Jews in the Maghreb have also been studied and several inventories compiled.[3] Gebhard Fartacek's interest focuses on the shared rituals of pilgrimages in Syria.[4] Only a few studies have explored interfaith devotions in Lebanon; among them is the research of Aubin-Bolantski on the shared sanctuary of Saydet Beshouat.[5]

Popular pilgrimages have spread beyond their orthodox Christian and Muslim forms in Lebanon, giving outlet to people's piety and their need to create a relationship between their daily existence and the eternal. Muslim, Christian, Druze,

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* We decided to refrain from scientific transcription of the numerous places and names that are mentioned in this article. Instead, we opted for a spelling based on the current pronunciation that would enable the reader to find the places on maps or to ask about them in Lebanon. For the etymology of Lebanese toponyms and the problem of their interpretation cf. Stefan Wild, *Libanesische Ortsnamen. Typologie und Deutung* [1973], Beirut: Ergon 2008.

1 *maqām*: A place that is filled with the blessing of an extraordinary person; *mazār*: any extraordinary place which is visited to receive a blessing.

2 Dionigi Albera and Maria Couroucli, *Religions traversées: lieux saints partagés entre chrétiens, musulmans et juifs en Méditerranée*, Arles: Actes Sud 2009; Dionigi Albera, "'Why Are You Mixing what Cannot be Mixed?' Shared Devotions in the Monotheisms", *History and Anthropology* 19 (2008), 37-59.

3 Louis Voinot, *Pèlerinages judéo-musulmans du Maroc*, Paris: Larose 1948; Issach Ben Ami, *Saint Veneration among the Jews in Morocco*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1990; Emile Dermengham, *Le culte des saints dans l'Islam maghrébine*, Paris: Gallimard 1954; Moncef M'Halla, "Culte des saints et culte extatique en islam maghrébin", in: *L'Authorité des saints: Perspectives historiques et socio-anthropologiques en Méditerranée occidentale*, Mohamed Kerrou, ed., Paris: IRMC-MAE 1998, 121-131.

4 Gebhard Fartacek, "Rethinking Ethnic Boundaries: Rituals of Pilgrimage and the Construction of Holy Places in Syria", in: *Ritual, Conflict and Consensus: Case Studies from Asia and Europe*, Gabriela Kiliánová, Christian Jahoda, and Michaela Ferencová, eds, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2012, 119-130.

5 Emma Aubin-Bolantski, "Miracles et apparitions de la Vierge au Liban : La preuve par l'Autre", unpublished paper, Séminaire *Anthropologie des dispositifs culturels*, Marseille: EHESS 2007; Emma Aubin-Bolantski, "La Vierge, les chrétiens, les musulmans et la nation", *Terrain* 51 (2008), 10-29.

and Buddhist[6] faiths are built around rituals. Saint worship and shared pilgrimages with shared figures of sainthood as their focus seem to have contributed to maintaining a dialogue between faith groups, even during some of the Lebanese war's most difficult moments. The coexistence of different religious Lebanese communities throughout history has been marked repeatedly by bloody conflicts, but belief in the concept of "living together" (arab.: *al-ʿaysh al-mushtarak*) has never been lost, as Aïda Kanafani-Zahar also demonstrated through her fieldwork in the Lebanese village of Hsoun.[7]

This article is concerned with the individual votive rituals shared by Muslims and Christians in present-day Lebanon. I will use results from my fieldwork begun ten years ago for my thesis in religious anthropology. My research surveys Christian and Muslim religious sites visited by both communities. In the course of my investigations and in the qualitative analysis of the data I collected,[8] it emerged that most of the devotional practices observed at the sacred sites are shared by both communities. In contrast with the codified religiosity of the mosque and church, believers have developed a less constrained religiosity in the form of *ziyārāt* (sg. *ziyāra*, visits to religious sites and saints' tombs). Some parties characterize these practices as 'popular', 'vulgar' or attribute them to 'folk religion'; they may even associate them with superstition. Official spokespersons of Christianity and Islam severely criticize such rituals and preach against their development. Ernest Gellner would identify such distinctions within the framework of the socio-anthropological concept of 'great religion' versus 'little tradition'.[9] Regardless of these biases, our observations demonstrate the importance of the *ziyārāt* in Lebanese culture and indicate the development of rituals related to votive pilgrimages. The rituals permit believers to express their piety and their need to create a relationship between their daily existence, their problems and the divine. In our field of observation what strikes us most is the piety of the believers and the sincerity of their belief in the potency of these practices.

It is all about the baraka*!*

baraka is the divine, miraculous force of blessing sent by the divine presence, sometimes through the vehicle of saints, to human beings. This force is thought to help the faithful in their everyday lives or in exceptional situations. The transmission of *baraka* operates mainly at sacred sites. For Fartacek, the transmission of *ba-*

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6 The visits of Buddhist believers at those worship sites are a new phenomenon in Lebanon, due to labour migration from South East Asia.

7 Aïda Kanafani-Zahar, *Liban : le vivre ensemble*; *Hsoun, 1994-2000*, Paris: Geuthner 2004.

8 For this field work we can count about 200 days of participant observation and 450 interviews across more than 30 religious sites, Christian and Muslim, in different regions in Lebanon.

9 Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1969.

raka is at the heart of shared ritual actions performed in the context of vows in Syria.[10] Most of the shared religious sanctuaries in Lebanon have very long histories that date back to pre-Christian and pre-Islamic times and many rituals are inherited from antiquity. Despite the change of official religion, the sacred places have remained remarkably stable, or, in the words of the French nineteenth-century thinker Ernest Renan: "The sacred will replace the sacred."[11] Holy places are thought to contain *baraka* even when transferred from one religion to another. *baraka*, a sort of sacredness, remains on site and is inherited and transmitted over generations. The faithful believe that the power of the *baraka* can also increase with time. The pilgrims perform *ziyārāt* in order to receive the graces that *baraka* offers, but they also leave traces of themselves that can be observed by other visitors. It is often physical contact that is used to absorb the divine power of *baraka*: the pilgrim touches the wall of the temple, church, or *maqām* and/or touches or kisses the saint's tomb. Most of the ritual actions observed serve to transmit *baraka*. Pilgrims from all religious communities consider *baraka* to have a positive effect. The faithful look to it asking for protection in their daily lives or for help in exceptionally difficult situations. People visit holy places in order to obtain *baraka,* in order to make vows or fulfil them. To maximize the chances of a wish being granted, *baraka* must be obtained. The motives for rituals are grounded in the idea of *baraka,* as the faithful try to be imprinted with the benediction and grace of the holy site and carry the blessedness home.

Planning, preparing, and constructing a votive pilgrimage

Our observations and fieldwork led us to conclude that most pilgrimages are motivated by a vow (*nadhr*). The devotional practices observed are individual rituals, therapeutic tools meant to help the individual negotiate illness and other human problems. The individual who wishes to make the vow plans a visit to the sacred place and then promises something to the saint in case the wish is fulfilled. The vow takes the form of a contract with the saint along the lines of "if you give me that, I will give you this". As soon as the wish is fulfilled, the pilgrim must honour his or her vow pay his or her debt; this is called *fakk al-nadhr* (releasing the vow). Some clerics and faithful individuals see this approach as a commercial transaction in which the individual intends to 'pay' the saint for the graces and miracles that she or he will realize. In some cases the devotees make offerings to the religious establishment when they wish to avoid such accusations and wish to maximize the chances of their request being fulfilled. Many believers make one or more promises to the saint when they make their vows or when these wishes are granted because they feel the weight of the debt they have to repay to thank the saint.

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10 Fartacek, "Rethinking".

11 Ernest Renan, *Mission de Phénicie*, Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, Beirut: Terre du Liban 1997.

Some pilgrims call upon several saints at the same time. Devotees can make a double votive pilgrimage to two saints, motivated by the same request. Or in other cases, the faithful makes a single visit that involves several saints in his or her rituals and prayers. He or she can, for example, go on pilgrimage to a religious site dedicated to the Virgin Mary but also light a candle to the image of Saint Charbel.

Each sanctuary proposes a series of prayer initiatives to the faithful. Rites are classified in order of importance by the pilgrims depending on their potential efficacy. Several rituals may overlap or be organized to make up a single votive approach or the framework of a single pilgrimage. Often, a main rite will be associated with other ritual practices followed in order to create an atmosphere favourable to the fulfilment of the wish, like in Mar Jirjis al-Khodr described below. During the course of pilgrimages, pilgrims organize a whole series of rites according to recommendations or according to intuition (touching, ritual kissing of the tomb or a sacred object, contemplation, prayers, etc.). The devotees can mix different rituals as they please according to a referee's recommendations (the referee may be a parent, neighbour, a close friend, a priest, etc.). Small gestures, practices, and attitudes also play a role in the final organization of the actions. How pilgrimages are conducted varies only slightly between Christians and Muslims.

The architectural or natural characteristics of worship sites sometimes propose different rituals of equivalent importance to pilgrims: in the rocky grotto of the *maqām* of Nabi Yousha (the prophet Joshua) in el-Minyeh, north of Tripoli, the faithful turn around the saint's tomb (*ḍariḥ*) three or seven times while praying and performing ablutions with water that seeps from the grotto's walls. In addition to these practices, pilgrims gather sacred soil from the grotto thought to contain *baraka*, lay pieces of fabric on the tomb, burn incense and light candles. In Mar Jirjis al-Khodr (Saint Georges)[12] in Sarba, ablutions with sacred water from the grotto constitute the main rite; in addition to this practice, pilgrims light candles, kneel, burn incense, and bring water back home either to drink or to continue with ablutions according to a fixed routine.

This article will provide a brief synopsis of the phenomenon of shared rituals, suggesting a typology of devotional practices which is based on the actions performed during the pilgrimage. Most of the rituals observed can be made when the wish is formulated or in fulfilment of the vow. Before enumerating the large typology of shared rituals we will describe the few devotional practices exclusive to Christian or Muslim communities in Lebanon.

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[12] In some places the names Georges and Khodr [Khiḍr] are both associated with the site; in other places, only one name is associated with the place. As is common in many Christian areas in Lebanon, 'Georges' is spelled like it is in French.

Rituals exclusively Christian or Muslim

The rite of **clothing associated with a saint** is *a priori* a Christian rite. The ritual consists of promising to wear a saint's cloth for a certain period of time. This is a ritual that can involve adults as well as children, women as well as men, and people of every social class, originating from different Lebanese regions, rural or urban. The faithful individual can promise to wear the saint's clothes for a short period or for a lifetime. The devotee wears the saint's costume for the period of the vow, everywhere she or he goes – to school, to university, to work, or at home. The most popular saint's costume is that of the Virgin Mary (blue and white). Especially in the month of May, many women and girls wearing the dress of the Virgin Mary can be seen on the streets. Other popular saints in this rite include the Lebanese Maronite saints Saint Charbel, Saint Rafqa and Saint Hardini (black dress), Saint Elijah (green dress with a red belt and scarf), Saint Francis (brown dress) and Saint Theresa (black and white). It is rare that Muslims take part in this, fearing the 'critical' gaze of the Other, as this rite forces the pilgrim to openly display his or her votive intentions.

Spreading perfume (*ʿiṭr*) in or around a sacred place is a typical Muslim practice. In general, in oriental cultures it is important to have an atmosphere for prayer that involves all the senses. Lighting candles, burning incense, touching icons and statues, and singing hymns are important ways for the pilgrims to experience a sacred atmosphere.

Offering salt is another typical Muslim practice. Salt has long held an important position in different religions and cultures. It was used by the Egyptians in the Bronze Age as part of larger offerings and was a commodity traded with the Phoenicians. Greeks also consecrated salt in their rituals. In the Bible salt features often as a symbol and Jewish temple offerings included salt. Today, salt can symbolize peace and friendship. In India, it is a symbol of good luck. For Lebanese Muslim devotees the offering of salt guarantees the fulfilment of the vow.

Muslims also frequently seal their vows by **placing a padlock** on or in the vicinity of a saint's tomb. This practice is now observed in countries around the world at secular sites such as bridges (i.e. in Moscow or Paris): lovers lock a padlock to the railing and throw away the key as a symbol of their eternal unity. Muslims try to 'chain' their vow to the saint, so that he will remember to fulfil it. If the vow is fulfilled the devotees unlock the padlock and remove it from the tomb.

The shared rituals: a broad typology

The typology proposed in this paper is based on the devotees' actions and not on the objects, the symbols or the elements that he or she will eventually use. The performed rites aim to establish, maintain, and seal communication between

individuals and saints. The faithful take advantage of all available means in order to maximize the possibility of the wish's success.

Most of the rites mentioned below are practised at Christian and Muslim sites and by devotees from both communities. Only few rituals can be practised by believers from different communities and yet only observed at sites related to a single faith community. One example would be the following practice: at numerous Christian sites of worship pilgrims of both communities try **to glue one or several coins to the walls** of the sanctuary or church or onto icons. The pilgrim concentrates and expresses his or her wish by pressing hard on the coin. It is considered a good omen if the coin sticks. Wishful pilgrims who visit the church of Saydeh in Ashrafiyya try to glue coins to the glass of the icon of the Virgin. In Mar Charbel in Annaya they try to glue coins to the marble plate on the rear side of Saint Charbel's tomb.

Walking towards the worship site is the most basic ritual that Christian and Muslims follow. This ritual comprises different elements: the distance walked, the circuit's level of difficulty (the footpath, route, stairs), and the means of approach: whether the pilgrim approaches with bare feet, on his or her knees, in a wheelchair, on crutches and so on. In Lebanon, the majority of pilgrims reach worship sites by car or by bus, but once near the worship site, the pilgrim may approach on foot. At the Mar Maron monastery in Annaya (Saint Charbel sanctuary), pilgrims walk to the Hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul or return on foot. The distance travelled varies: for example pilgrims who walk towards Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa in the month of May often start from Jounieh (app. 6 km). A trekking trail was organized a few years ago to encourage this pilgrimage.[13] In other cases there is only a short walk from the shrine to a holy place connected to the sanctuary, such as a cave or a tree. From the Sitt Sha'waneh *maqām* in Ammiq (Bekaa valley), devotees walk towards a cave known to contain *baraka*, where the saint Sha'waneh was hidden throughout her life with a child. From the Greek Orthodox monastery of Saydet al-Nourieh (Our Lady of the Light) in Ras Shekka, worshippers walk down a narrow path with stairs to the old convent carved inside the cliff.

Simple shared rituals and gestures such as kneeling, lighting candles, burning incense (*bakhūr*), kissing and touching tombs, statues, and walls of holy place are practices common to both Christians and Muslims**.** These rituals are often practised in parallel to the main rite. Most of these gestures aim to create an atmosphere that involves the human sense faculties of touch, smell, hearing, and sight. Other gestures, including the touching and kissing of statues, tombs, and walls are intended to allow pilgrims to take *baraka* physically from the holy site. Nowadays some radical Muslims have begun to preach that the lighting of candles at religious sites is a Christian tradition that should not be practised. How-

[13] Cf. http://www.darbessama.org (accessed 12 June 2013).

ever, in many Muslim shrines in Lebanon, the lighting of candles is still a common practice.

The **prayers** that accompany the uttering of the vow vary greatly. The great majority of Christian or Muslim saints have special prayers (*ṣalāt* or *ziyārāt*) attributed to them. The faithful recite these prayers before formulating their personal wish when visiting the shrines. Most of the prayers at Christian sites are printed on small slips of paper that are distributed to visitors; at Muslim sites the prayers are generally displayed in a frame hung on the saint's tomb (*ḍarīḥ*) or on a wall nearby. Pilgrims also sometimes recite special prayers for the sick. Many of them incorporate their own votive prayers. Other pilgrims intensify their prayer requests by invoking 'powerful' saints other than the patron saint of the visited worship site, such as the Virgin Mary, Saint Charbel, Saint Rafqa and others.

The devotees may also leave a written prayer or a wish. They can write it down in the book of prayers and wishes – the 'golden book' of the shrine – and emotional notes are scrawled on pieces of papers and left in a symbolically sacred location, like the base of a statue or the frame of an icon. In the garden of Our Lady of Lourdes inside the convent and school of al-Azarieh (Ashrafiyyah, East Beirut), visitors leave a small piece of paper with their wish at the base of the central statue of the Virgin Mary. In the chapel of Saint Marina in the Qadisha valley, a 'golden book' is full of prayers and wishes written in many languages. Consulting such material is very interesting and offers insight into the pilgrims' motivations, wishes, outlooks, to whom they address their prayers and for whom. The notes testify to all manner of human suffering and needs: some express gratitude for healing, others for success in exams, for winning the lottery, for getting a job after a long period of unemployment, for finding a husband, etc.

Christians and Muslims can add faith-exclusive prayers to the 'vow-prayer' and to the shared prayers: Christians go on to prayers such as the Lord's Prayer or Hail Mary, rosaries, or novenas and, likewise, Muslims often proceed to *rakʿāt*, genuflections practised in daily ritual prayers.

Offerings or 'ex-votos' are presented at the moment of the wish-making or in gratitude for a favour bestowed. Offerings constitute a sealed pact between the faithful and the divine, an open request for help with the offering – a sort of 'down-payment'. Some clerics consider this attitude towards prayer as an exchange for services as too commercial a transaction and preach that wishes should be formulated from the heart, without any commitment to, or 'contract' with, the saint. The faithful repeat frequently how they address the saint in order to assure the shrine-keeper that in case he or she should answer the wish they will do such and such or offer the shrine such and such.

Offerings can be classified into two major types: valuable offerings and symbolic ex-votos. Valuable offerings take different forms. Financial donations constitute the most common offerings. All sanctuaries have a box for monetary donations, either a small lockbox or a large safe. These boxes accept small donations; if

a donor wants to offer a large sum he must refer to the sanctuary's religious authorities. Currently financial donations can also be made over the internet or by bank transfer.[14]

The faithful also offer valuable personal objects like jewellery, gold and silver. The emotional value of the object for the person corresponds to the intensity of the desire for the wish to be fulfilled. The miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary in the Greek Orthodox church of Our Lady of the Presentation (Ashrafiyya, East Beirut) wears a pearl necklace offered by a devotee. Objects made by the devotee or by someone else at the devotee's personal request, such as icons, carpets and frames, are intended to decorate the site. Pilgrims can also offer items for the maintenance of the site: candles, oil, soap, detergent, brooms, etc. They also often offer religious worship items like beads, gospels, Qur'ans, icons or statues of saints.

Some devotees promise to construct a place of worship, be it a small *mazār* or a large church. One of the most popular and oldest stories regarding such a vow is the story of the construction of the monastery of Our Lady of the Light (Saydet al-Nourieh). Legend has it that on a stormy night sailors found themselves in peril in Ras Shekka Bay. There are variations to the legend: some legends mention the Emperor Constantine, others the king Theodosius and others common sailors. In all versions the Virgin Mary appears illuminated in the cliff and saves the ship from drowning. To thank the Virgin for this miracle, sailors promised to build a monastery in the cliff of Ras Shekka.

In Lebanon we can count thousands of small *mazārs* or oratories dedicated to different saints. Many were built as ex-voto offerings after the attainment of a wish. Some pilgrims offer to contribute to the installations inside the religious site, providing their technical 'know how', assisting with the installation of the pavement of a church or working on the plumbing or the electricity. The construction of toilets for an oratory can be an ex-voto, like at the Shiite *mazār* al-Saydeh in S'aydeh (Bekaa valley). In the past, marble plates with epigraphs of thanks were very often offered to sanctuaries in Lebanon as in many shrines around the world. It is no longer a popular practice in Lebanon, but such plates are visible in different sanctuaries, such as in the Hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul in Annaya, at the *mazār* of Saydet el-Bzaz in Mar Mikhael (Beirut), or at the church of Saydet Khaldeh.

Some pilgrims are convinced that **leaving symbolic objects** at the holy place guarantees the saint's fulfilment of a specific demand. This rite testifies to the pilgrim's need to extend his or her presence physically to the saint, to ensure that he or she does not forget the vows made. The type of objects left and the modality of leaving them vary according to the places of worship and to the pilgrim's profile. Worshippers may leave personal belongings with a symbolic link to the vow at the site; for example a pen used for an exam might be left to ask for successful exams or a small toy car to ask for the protection of a child.

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[14] Cf. for instance http://www.strafqa.org/index1.htm#donations (accessed 12 June 2013).

Another practice that can be observed at different religious sites is the leaving-behind of fragments of clothing or fabric attached to a sacred tree or floating in the water of a sacred cave. These textile fragments may also be symbolic in nature: bras are left for breastfeeding problems, bibs for infant illness. In front of the *mazār* of the Saydeh in S'aydeh (Bekaa valley), the only Muslim religious site dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Lebanon, fragments of clothing or fabric are tied to a sacred olive tree. In Mar Antonios (Saint Anthony) in Hadath (southern suburbs of Beirut), women hang plastic bags filled with stones from olive trees. Pilgrims leave clothing or fabric in the water of the holy cave of Saint Georges al-Khodr in Sarba. Different objects such as piles of beads, elastic bands and handkerchiefs are also hung on the wall of a cave or the grill of a statue, a grave or a tomb (*ḍarīḥ)*. We can observe such offerings on the grill of the statue of Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa. In the *maqām* of Nabi Ayla (the prophet Elijah) in the village of Nabi Ayla (Bekaa valley), the faithful attach beads, tissues and padlocks to the grill of the *ḍarīḥ*. Attaching padlocks is most commonly observed in Muslim sites, as previously mentioned.

As at other holy sites around the world after a miraculous healing which people relate to the pilgrimage has occurred, pilgrims might leave material objects such as bandages or wheelchairs at the site of the miracle. Until the mid-twentieth century devotees at Christian sites in Lebanon still asked for miracles by offering a silver charm (in the form of a crescent, a hand, a foot) out of gratitude for a wish fulfilled. This practice, however, does not exist anymore because the handmade production of such objects has been lost. We can observe some of these silver shapes around the icon of Our Lady of the Presentation in Ashrafiyya (East Beirut), or in the small cave-chapel of Saydet el-Bzaz in Mar Mikhael (East Beirut), or in the small museum area of the church of Saydet el-Taleh in Deir al-Qamar (Chouf area).

A recent practice is one of devotees leaving photos at holy Christian sites to maintain a figurative presence close to the saint, in order to remind him of his duty to fulfil their wishes. Photos may be placed at the bottom of the icon of the saint, or by his tomb. In the nascent pilgrimage to the house of the beatified Estephan Nehme in Lehfed (Mount Lebanon), pilgrims fill the plastic covering of the door of the saint's room with photos and prayers. In the cave-chapel of Mar Abda El Mouchamar in Zikrit (north Beirut), the clerics have installed a board on which the visitors may hang their photos (see Plates, figure 3). This has also been observed in the monastery of Mar Elishaa in the Qadisha valley.

Bringing home *baraka:* Almost all pilgrims bring something back from the worship site with them, something believed to contain the *baraka* or 'sacredness' of the place (soil, water, a piece of cloth, tree or plant leaves, pieces of bark or roots). They wish to maintain their relationship with the saint through such material mementos. At some religious sites, especially Christian ones, service counters are at the disposal of the devotees in order to provide them with oil and incense. Counters such as these can be observed in Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa, the

sanctuary of Saint Rafqa in Jrabta (Jourd al batroun), the convent of Saint Joseph in Jrabta and the Greek Orthodox church of Saydet al-Nourieh, Ras Shekka. At Muslim sites the guardian of the holy place usually provides visitors with oil and incense; occasionally the pilgrims serve themselves at the sanctuary from the offerings of others. Back home, the use of these mementos varies. Some people will keep these items on a home altar or oratory and continue to seek benedictions and graces from them. Others will use them to create amulets and some will imbibe them, either directly or after having mixed them with other ingredients.

Relics of saints are also a way to carry *baraka* from the site. The pilgrims take the *baraka* of the relics by touching them directly or by touching the wall or the grill that protects the relics. The faithful sometimes can take a relic home. It may be a relic fabricated by clerics, such as the relics of Saint Charbel distributed in Mar Maron Monastery in Annaya, made by priests and monks from the remains of Saint Charbel's body following specific procedures. In some locations devotees may have the opportunity to take real relics from the remains of holy men. We can cite as an example the remains of Abouna Youssef Abi Maroun Maatouk (Church of St Michael, Serʿel, North Lebanon). The priest was considered a holy man during his life and after his death people began to take *baraka* from his remains by collecting pieces of his body or some of his hair. They could do so because his body was exposed to the open, seated on a chair in a locked room under the church where he had served. After a time, the clerics of the church decided to protect the body of the priest with a glass case and now visitors may only take *baraka* by touching the glass of the case.

Since antiquity, in thousands of pilgrimages across the world, **water rituals** have held a very important place. Water is thought to heal, rejuvenate youth, ensure life, and purify because it dissolves and eliminates impurities. Water is used in different types of rituals, external ablutions and swallowing practices among them. Different types of ablutions can be observed: ablutions can be made at the holy place directly, or brought home following a symbolic routine, or at moments of symbolic significance (i.e. the ablution of water sprinkled over a woman's belly before sexual intercourse). Holy water may be drunk at the site of collection or at home (for example women who wish to become pregnant drink holy water for nine days or a student might drink water before an important exam). Holy water can be consumed on its own or mixed with other sacred elements. Pilgrims can take sacred water from a fountain, cave, or basin at most religious sites in Lebanon.

In the *maqām* of Nabi Najjoum (Bekaa valley), there is a basin where the water level does not vary according to the season. This water is considered miraculous and the faithful come from very far to drink it or use it for ablutions. At the oratory of Mar Jirjis (Saint Georges) in al-Khodr Batyieh, Sarba, pilgrims visit the cave and with its waters perform partial or full body ablutions. At the well of Mar Nohra, Smar Jbeil, there is no longer any water, but because the water was con-

sidered miraculous in the past, people take *baraka* from the well by putting their head in it (see Plates, figure 4).

The **circumambulation rite** (*ṭawāf, ṭoufan, tatouaf*) is characteristic of certain sites in the context of votive pilgrimages and consists of circling a worship site a certain number of times (generally one, three or seven times). The site may be a tomb (*ḍariḥ)*, a stalagmite, or a tree. Multiple examples of this ritual are noted among both Christians and Muslims. At most Muslim worship sites visited in Lebanon, pilgrims make an almost systematic procession around the saint's tomb (*ḍarīḥ*), one, three or seven times anti-clockwise while reciting prayers, thereby re-enacting the Meccan *ṭawāf*.

In Mar Bandileymoun in Bijdarfel, a rite practised by childless women consists of circumambulating the church three times accompanied by a single virgin woman and a mother of several children. In front of the church of Mar Sassine (Saint Sisinus in Beit Mery), the fertility rite consists of passing three times around the roots of the oak tree in the church square.

The **incubation rite** (*laylat al-istikhāra*), a practice that still exists, consists of sleeping – sometimes for several nights and in very precarious conditions – in such places as the courtyard of the worship site, in front of the sanctuary's door, on the ground, in the sacred interior and other spots in order to soak up the *baraka* from the saint's blessing. Accounts of this rite exist for many Christian and Muslims pilgrimage sites. Until the 1950s, it was not only the faithful who slept at these sites, but also sick livestock. Now in some Christian sanctuaries, such as the convent of Mar Maron in Annaya, clerics are trying to convince the faithful to abandon this practice by closing the gates of the convent at night time, but devotees continue to sleep in front of the closed doors. In some Christian monasteries there are rooms to welcome guests but overnight accommodation is not free of charge and not all pilgrims can afford the rates (charged accommodation is offered for example at the convent of Saydet Machmoucheh in the Jezzine area, South Lebanon or the monastery of Saint Anthony in Qozhaya, North Lebanon). At Druze shrines like Nabi Bahaeddine in Sharon, Mount Lebanon or Nabi Ayyoub (the prophet Job) in Niha, rooms are available for pilgrims who wish to sleep in the sanctuary and visitors pay as much as they can in the form of a donation to the sanctuary.

The preparation and consumption of a 'remedy'. The intake of a 'remedy' can take several forms. Sometimes the pilgrim swallows something from the holy place (like sand or oil) and sometimes he or she takes the time to 'cook' a 'remedy'. Below are some examples of practices and receipts:

- Swallowing a piece of cotton soaked in blessed oil
- Swallowing a piece of communion bread soaked in blessed oil
- Swallowing soil – either dry or dissolved in water – from the worship site, or a 'sacred' stone that has been soaked
- Swallowing an image of a saint that has been soaked

– Drinking boiled water that has been blessed, along with soil or tree leaves from the worship site.

At the sanctuary of Saint Rafqa in Jrabta, nuns offer visitors soil from the tomb of the saint in a small piece of paper. Many pilgrims swallow this soil on the spot and make a wish. At the *maqām* of Nabi Ayyoub (Prophet Job), Niha or at the *maqām* of Nabi al-Jelil in Qana (South Lebanon) visitors take pieces of bark from the sacred tree believed to contain *baraka* and sometimes make infusions out of it. At the *maqām* of Nabi Berri (North Lebanon) pilgrims collect acorns from the oak trees to make infusions. Devotees are frequently observed in the area around the holy sites picking tree leaves and plants to 'cook' at home with sacred water to drink to obtain *baraka*.

Rolling boulders, sacred stones or other objects (*maḥdaleh, ḥajar)* over the body: dry ablutions. At numerous Christian and Muslim worship sites in Lebanon the existence of sacred stones is noted: Saydet Beshouat, Mar Jirjis in Amshit, Mar Boutros in Akoura, Mar Antonios in Qozhaya, Mar Doumit, *maqām* Nabi Nouh in Kirk, or *maqām* Nabi Youssef in Haytla. These boulders, called *maḥdaleh* (roller) by some or simply *al-ḥajar* (the stone), are considered to have therapeutic properties if rubbed on an injured part of the body. They can be simple pebbles, small antique columns, or concretions that come from natural cavities, stalactites or stalagmites (see Plates, figure 5).

Many times in Saydet Beshouat thieves have tried to steal the sacred stone with the result that finally the priest of the church decided to lock it inside a metal box built into the church's south wall. This protective action led to an evolution of the ritual: when the devotees could no longer pass the stone over their bodies, they began to take *baraka* by touching the stone. There are many references to a miraculous stone in the church of Saint John at the Beirut gate, but unfortunately this stone disappeared when the church was converted to Al-Khodr Mosque. The sacred stone of the sanctuary of Saydet Maghdoucheh also disappeared a few years ago and was never replaced. At the Sunni *maqām* of Imam Ouzai in the southern suburbs of Beirut, as in many other shrines, the ritual of touching the sacred stone is still practised and miracles are still reported.

Anointing with oil is an age-old tradition. Oil that has been blessed is most often distributed at Christian worship sites, but it is also found at many Muslim worship sites, sometimes offered by the faithful themselves. In most cases at Christian religious sites, the oil is presented to the faithful on pieces of cotton, or cotton sticks, in little sachets or small flasks. At Christian sites the cotton is neatly presented and clerics invest money into this presentation. At Muslim sites visitors must bring small bottles or small boxes with them to collect the oil. At the Druze Shrine of Tannoukhi in Abey, the women overseers at the gate offered me sacred oil to take home in a reused medicinal box. In Mar Elias (Saint Elijah) in Ain Saadeh, visitors may choose between swallowing a piece of bread soaked in oil or wearing a cotton belt or anointing their skin with sacred oil. Often devotees anoint

injured parts of the body with oil. Different types of anointing can be observed: anointment takes place at the holy place or at home following a fixed routine or at symbolic moments (i.e. anointing the body before a surgery).

Wearing a sacred cloth belt is as common a practice for Christians as it is for Muslims. At Christian sites of worship (Mar Elias in Ain Saadeh, Mar Charbel in Annaya, Mar Antonios in Hadath) pilgrims are provided with cotton belts or cotton threads blessed beforehand by priests. They wear them directly against their skin as a belt under their clothing, as a bracelet or put them in the car or at home for blessings. Muslims use the Christian belts or make their own at home or at the worship site, using, for example, pieces of the *sitār* (green cloth that covers a saint's tomb). If the devotees prepare a belt at home they can bring it to the shrine to be blessed by a priest or a shaykh or by the power of the *baraka* itself. At the sanctuary of Saydet Bechouat the visitors may take a thread from a bunch of cotton threads presented with the sacred oil and incense.

The manufacturing and wearing of amulets (*dkhireh, ḥjāb, ḥijāb [ḥijāb]*). Amulets are manufactured by devotees or by religious men combining different elements believed to be sacred: pieces of cloth are sewed together to hold parts of a relic, prayers, images of saints, pieces of cotton soaked in blessed oil, soil from the monastery, a tree leaf from the monastery and so forth. Among Christians, these amulets are often called *dkhireh* and among Muslims, *ḥijāb* or *ḥjāb*. They may be worn for a symbolic limited period of time or for life and may be worn on clothing, kept at home, sewed on pillows or kept in cars. The amulets can be handmade by the faithful or bought at religious sites, like at the gate of *maqām* Nabi Bahaeddine, or from shaykhs. We do not have any record regarding the manufacturing of amulets by clerks in the Christian communities but shayks in some Muslim communities do craft amulets and offer them to the faithful.

Sacrifice is an ancient ritual that has been practiced by Christians and Muslims for a very long time. All documented cases of sacrifice involve a domestic animal, more specifically a sheep or several chickens. Two kinds of sacrifices have been observed: sacrifice at or near the home of the pilgrim and sacrifice at the site of worship. Tradition requires that the sacrifice be performed in the courtyard or at the sanctuary's door *(ʿalā l-bāb*). However, in most sanctuaries it is no longer possible to respect this tradition due to strict bans imposed by clerics for hygiene reasons. At some Muslim religious sites rooms are fitted out like slaughterhouses for such sacrifices, as in front of the *maqām* of Naba Ayla (Prophet Elijah) in the village of Nabi Ayla (Bekaa valley). Often spaces are provided for pilgrims to have a meal on site after the sacrifice. The sacrifice takes on a social dimension, grouping the faithful around a meal. In other Muslim sanctuaries there are open air altars installed in front of the shrines to allow for sacrifices, such as the set of concrete arches with a drainage system found in front of the *maqām* of Nabi Issa in Sghar (Akkar). The Christian priests encourage devotees to perform the sacrifices in regular butcheries and to come afterwards to offer the meat to the sanctuary.

Then the priests can decide to keep the sacrifice for the convent or distribute it to poor communities.

Rituals in evolution

Like beings, pilgrimages and rituals have life spans of their own: they are created, grow, evolve, and may die or disappear completely. This article will not treat the phenomenon of the life span of rituals, but some examples of devotional practices can help us to understand the development and the evolution of rituals.

With the development of technology some rituals have been created, have evolved or have been transformed. The development of photography, for instance, has permitted the creation of a new ritual that consists of leaving photographs at worship sites, on the icons themselves or on boards. Pilgrims seek to maintain their figurative presence near the saints in order to ensure that they will follow up on their vows. A few years ago it was very rare to find photos in holy places. As photos have become less expensive over the years and more accessible to lower and middle-class pilgrims, at some sites we now find hundreds of photos left for the saint reminding him or her of the vow of the faithful (e.g. in the chapel cave of Mar Abda El Mouchamar in Zikrit, the house of Estephan Nehme in Lehfed, Mar Elishaa convent in the Qadisha valley).

The development of printing houses has allowed believers to order the printing of holy images and prayers. Some devotees will promise to promote the saint within a community by distributing images or prayers in exchange for fulfilment of the vow. E-rituals, rituals performed via the internet, have also become more common. Electronic ritual practices can be observed on websites or on social networks. Believers today can light candles, recite prayers, or send a greeting to the saints through internet websites.[15]

Believers and shrine keepers can also provoke the creation of new rituals without intending to. We observed the apparition of a new ritual at the end of the *al-matraqa*[16] ritual in the Church of Mar Charbel's tomb at the Maronite convent in Annaya. A wooden hammer was exhibited in front of a window in the church of Mar Charbel's tomb and once a woman used it as *maḥdaleh*, rolling it over her injured body. Visitors watched her and imitated her and it became a ritual. From that day on at the church, we observed a line of worshippers waiting in front of the window to perform the ritual. Clerics did not appreciate this practice and took the wooden hammer away from the visitors and so the ritual survived for a few months only. In the sanctuary of the beatified Abouna Yaaqoub (the church of Saydet el-Bahr, Our Lady of the Sea) a basket is filled with small papers with quo-

15 Cf. for instance http://www.marcharbel.com/english/htm (accessed 12 June 2013).

16 A *matraqa* [*miṭraqa*] is a wooden hammer used to hit a *sonj*, a metal plate used to produce a sound like a bell.

tations ascribed to the saint. Nuns prepared these baskets to spread the teaching of Abouna Yaaqoub. Devotees, however, take these paper copies and formulate a vow or think about something in particular and read the content of the paper as a message from the saint, as a 'fortune note'.

Rituals forever and together

Given the density of the number of worship sites in Lebanon as well as the volume of visits made by the faithful of different communities, many pilgrimages go beyond that which can be classified as monolithically religious. At these worship sites, an interreligious conviviality is experienced that is favourable to the construction of local and national identities, in which so many Lebanese have trouble investing themselves.

A *ziyāra* is a visit to the saint, *ṣāḥib al-maqām* or *al-mazār*. The pilgrim hopes that the saint will listen to his or her problems and requests. He or she addresses the saints as confidants, believing that they understand his or her difficulties. In the course of their pilgrimages, believers meet other faithful individuals at sanctuaries with the same problems and difficulties. They seek the aid of the divine together.

Based on my field research (participant observation) at local sanctuaries in present-day Lebanon, I can conclude that there is evidence of *existential* or *spontaneous communitas* in Turner's sense.[17] My observation of shared pilgrimages and practices does not fit with the Durkheimian vision of pilgrimage sites that allow each religious community to affirm its own unique identity.[18] I heard often from pilgrims "*Allāh wāḥid*" ("There is only one God") and also "*Kull al-qaddisīn fiyon al-barakeh*" ("All saints possess *baraka*"). Pilgrims and sanctuary-keepers strongly emphasize that the shrines and the saints are sacred to all and that saints operate miracles for Christians and Muslims without distinction. Believers meet one another and perform the same practices without trying to hide or deny their religious identity in any way. There is no pressure at the religious sites on visitors and the religious identity of the pilgrims is perfectly preserved and respected.

My research highlights the role that these practices have today in interreligious dialogue. A pilgrimage is a path towards a sacred place that leads to an encounter with a saint, experienced through a series of rituals and devotional practices. On pilgrimages in Lebanon, an encounter with the Other, the Christian with the Muslim and the Muslim with the Christian, often occurs even when it is not an initial objective of the pilgrimage. These practices are a natural means to initiate dialogue in a convivial atmosphere.

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17 Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter 1995.

18 Emile Durckheim, *Les formes élementaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris: PUF 1960.

Conforming to and Breaking with Social Norms: Two Contrary Modes of *baraka*

Gebhard Fartacek / Lorenz Nigst

'Min shān al-baraka!'

What makes people visit holy places? Regardless of whether one talks to Alawites, Druzes, Ismaelites, Sunnites or Christians of different confessions in rural areas of Greater Syria, one essentially receives the same answer: *'min shān al-baraka!'*

Thus, for the sake of *baraka*. *Baraka* is seen as a force that augments the good, increases fertility and which helps people to make the right decisions; it keeps people grounded and gives strength; it makes an individual healthy and is conducive to 'sound' relations between the people. *Baraka*, one is told, is helpful in respect of remorse and forgiveness. Moreover, *baraka* is said to be a preventive force against the machinations of the demons and the effects of the Evil Eye.

Analytically speaking, the transmission of *baraka* in the context of local pilgrimage[1] is about coping with life and averting misfortune as well as about leading a life which, speaking in ethical and moral terms, is correct. Special importance is ascribed to *baraka* concerning situations where a decision has to be made; wherever the notions of good and bad and moral norms and values are involved and wherever belongings and demarcations are at stake, *baraka* strengthens people in their efforts to do the 'right' thing.

In this article we aim to uncover the logic of why *baraka* is efficacious in the context of holy places. We thereby pay special attention to the local norms and values regarding 'good' communal living and the mechanism of individual and collective conflict management. Our article is composed of five parts: at the beginning, we take a look at the existing definitions of *baraka* found in academic studies. In the second part, we present ethnographical material on norm-conformant and dissociative notions of *baraka*. This material was collected during the course of ethnological fieldwork[2] at primarily rural pilgrimage sites in the Syr-

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1 *Local* or *local-culture* is used in the sense of Gellner's *little tradition* (cf. Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1969). For further considerations of the term cf. Gebhard Fartacek, "Volksreligion", in: *Lexikon der Globalisierung*, Fernand Kreff, Eva-Maria Knoll, Andre Gingrich, eds, Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag 2011, 415-418; and Gebhard Fartacek, "Lokale Heiligtümer", in: *Lexikon der Globalisierung*, Fernand Kreff, Eva-Maria Knoll, Andre Gingrich, eds, Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag 2011, 233-234.

2 The long-term fieldwork was primarily carried out by Gebhard Fartacek in the years between 1997 and 2010 – before the so-called Arab Spring and the escalation of the Syrian war – in ethno-religiously heterogeneous areas of the Syrian Arab Republic: Jabal al-ʿArab, Ḥawrān, the Qalamūn- and Lādhiqiyya-mountains as well as in north-western Syria. The

ian Arab Republic. It is related to both the cognitive construction of holy places and the ritual practices that are directed at the transmission of *baraka*. In the third and fourth part of this article we want to put up for discussion a theoretical model to explain how *baraka* works in the context of local pilgrimage in Syria. In the sense of a core argument, we are suggesting that – in respect of norms and values – *baraka* occurs in two different modes: on the one hand, *baraka* becomes manifest where something does not conform to norms; on the other hand, within local-culture structures, *baraka* unfolds its efficaciousness as a norm-conformant force. In the sense of concluding working hypotheses, we suggest in the last part of this article that the success and continuance of the conception of *baraka* are due to the fact that we are dealing here with the interlocking of what analytically speaking can be comprehended as *structure* and *anti-structure* in the local cultural context.[3]

Some thoughts on current explanations of baraka

At the beginning, it must be underlined that the concept of *baraka* has been the focus of research interest for a long time.[4] Accordingly, definitions and paraphrases of what actually is to be understood under the term *baraka* abound in scholarly works. The following efforts at translating and explaining *baraka* serve as examples: "Segenskraft"[5]; "religiöses Charisma"[6]; "Segen Gottes"[7]; "Gnade Gottes"[8]; "göt-

collection of the ethnographic data and its analysis followed the approach of *case-reconstructive research* during the course of which techniques of qualitative interviewing and participant observation are applied (cf. Gebhard Fartacek, *Unheil durch Dämonen? Geschichten und Diskurse über das Wirken der Ǧinn. Eine sozialanthropologische Spurensuche in Syrien*, Vienna: Böhlau-Verlag 2010, 36-54). For a comprehensive documentation of the investigated pilgrimage sites see Gebhard Fartacek, *Pilgerstätten in der syrischen Peripherie. Eine ethnologische Studie zur kognitiven Konstruktion sakraler Plätze und deren Praxisrelevanz*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Klasse 700. Band, Veröffentlichungen zur Sozialanthropologie Nr. 5, Vienna 2003, 27-150; Gebhard Fartacek "Markers of Identity: Local Sanctuaries and Ethno-religious Boundaries in the present-day Syrian Arab Republic", in: *Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian Communities in the World*, Batrouney, Trevor et al., eds, Heidelberg: Winter 2014, 191-214.

3 We thank Prof. Dr. Nour Farra-Haddad for specific hints on common-shared pilgrimage sites in Lebanon.

4 Cf. e.g. Edmond Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du nord*, Alger: Adolphe Jourdan 1909; Edmond Doutté, *Les Marabouts*, Paris: Ernest Leroux 1900; Joseph Chelhod, "La barakah chez les Arabes ou l'influence bienfaisante du sacré", *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 148 (1955), 68-88; Edward Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* [1926], New Hyde Park (NY): University Books 1968; Edward Westermarck, *The Moorish Conception of Holiness (Barakah)*, Helsingfors: Academiska Bokhandeln 1916.

5 Kurt Beck, *Arbeit in Afrika*, Münster: LIT Verlag 1996, 144; Anne-Sophie Fröhlich, *Priesterliche Aufgaben im sunnitschen Islam*, Münster: LIT Verlag 1997, 27.

6 Beck, *Arbeit*, 167.

7 Beck, *Arbeit*, 364.

8 Beck, *Arbeit*, 175.

tliche Gabe"[9]; "wundertätige Kraft"[10]; "blessings"[11]; "divine blessing"[12]; "blessing that is bestowed by Sufi holy men and women (often after death)"[13]; "[…] *al-barakah,* which means, or is often translated as, 'blessing', 'honoured' and 'respected'"[14]; "beneficent force of divine origin, which causes superabundance in the physical sphere, prosperity and happiness in the psychic order"[15]; "Sufis conceive of the *barakah* as a divine gift that is granted to certain people due to their experience of the *numinous*"[16]; "divine blessedness"[17]; "charisma"[18], "wider ranging concept indicating emanation of grace, or blessing"[19]; "beneficial power which lifts the person from the human place up towards the supernatural"[20]; "*barakah* is technically the blessing of God; it is goodwill and healing virtue emanating from him. In popular thought it becomes concentrated in certain places and individuals"[21]; "the gift to predict, to prevent, to avoid and, finally, to heal an illness"[22]; "grace"[23]; "le pouvoir attribué par Dieu à l'homme saint"[24]; "fluide surnaturel bénéfique"[25]; "grâce divine; force surnaturelle à l'origine de tous les faits prodigieux"[26]; "influx

9 Fröhlich, *Priesterliche Aufgaben,* 27.
10 Fröhlich, *Priesterliche Aufgaben*, 41.
11 Josef W. Meri, "Aspects of Barakah (Blessings) and Ritual Devotion among Medieval Muslims and Jews", *Medieval Encounters* 5 (1999), 46-9, here 46.
12 Christopher Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous:* Ziyāra *and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt,* Leiden: Brill 1998, 10.
13 David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, x (glossary).
14 Oliver Leaman, "Barakah", in: Oliver Leaman, ed., *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, Abingdon, New York: Routledge 2006, 109-114, here 109.
15 Liyakat N. Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam,* Albany: State University of New York Press 2006, 45.
16 Takim, *Heirs*, 46.
17 Gary S. Gregg, *The Middle East: A Cultural Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press 2005, 122.
18 Gregg, *Middle East*, 122.
19 Christoffel Anthonie Olivier Nieuwenhuijze, *The lifestyles of Islam: Recourse to Classicisms, Need of Realism,* Leiden: Brill 1985, 105.
20 Nieuwenhuijze, *Lifestyles*, 105.
21 Carlo Caldarola, *Religion and Societies: Asia and the Middle East,* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1982, 133.
22 Sofiane Bouhdiba, "Die Bedeutung des Konzeptes *Barakah* im städtischen Armenmilieu in Tunesien gestern, heute und morgen", *Curare* 29 (2006), 165-171, here 165 (our translation).
23 Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, 121.
24 Sophie Bava, "De la 'barakah aux affaires' : ethos économico- religieux et transnationalité chez les migrants sénégalais mourides", *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 192 (2003), 69-84, here 73.
25 Katia Boissevain, *Sainte parmi les saints. Sayyda Mannûbiya ou les recompositions culturelles dans la Tunisie contemporaine,* Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose 1996, 237.
26 Sossie Andezian, *Expériences du divin dans l'Algérie contemporaine. Adeptes des saints de la région de Tlemcen,* Paris: CNRS Éditions 2001, 217.

bénéfique"[27]; "un sacré diffus et impersonnel, la *barakah*, puissance mystérieuse et bienfaisante qui favorise les êtres d'élite et peut être transmise par hérédité"[28].

Without doubt, such paraphrases and efforts at explaining *baraka* are appropriate in their respective contexts and their diversity illustrates how extraordinarily complex the topic of *baraka* is. We think, however, that it is important not to start from a rigid preconception of *baraka* – in the sense of equations such as '*baraka* = blessing' or '*baraka* = divine grace' – for they foreclose any further scrutiny of the conception of *baraka*. In cases where no further-reaching analytical examination of the term is carried out, it is precisely such equations which cause some unease, for – objectively speaking – they replace one unknown with another: has one really understood a great deal if one 'knows' that *baraka* is 'divine grace'? Do not such equations conceal questions of how *baraka* is generated as well as questions regarding the epistemological foundations upon which the efficaciousness of *baraka* rests? Furthermore one may sense a certain unease in light of the fact that not *all* social groups conceive *baraka* alike[29] – and that, evidently, there are considerable regional differences.

If one reflects on the empirical situation at Syrian pilgrimage sites against the backdrop of local cultural conceptions of norms and values and against the backdrop of processes of conflict management, the question arises: how is *baraka* generated? What exactly happens when people acquire *baraka*? Which mechanisms are at work behind the much cited 'healing from disease'? All the extraordinary incidents that are told in relation to holy places and all the narratives about individuals who found healing at a holy place after they had already been 'given up' by doctors deserve to be analysed more carefully. Finally, the question arises of how inter-ethnic communication processes which are regularly claimed to occur at holy places are to be explained against the backdrop of the transmission of *baraka*.

Constitutive features of holy places and the transmission of baraka*: ethnographic observations*

In the following pages, we want to focus upon the epistemological foundations of holy places and on the ritual practices in which *baraka* becomes manifest.

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27 Nelly Amri, *La Sainte de Tunis. Présentation et traduction de l'hagiographie de 'Âisha al-Mannûbiyya*, Arles: Actes Sud 2008, 21.

28 Bourdieu, *Sociologie de l'Algérie*, 8th ed., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 2006, 104.

29 Cf. Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts,* Pasadena: William Carey Library 1991, 200, who alludes to the polarization between *great tradition* and *little tradition*: "*Barakah* is always seen as benevolent because its ultimate source is Allah […]. Nevertheless, orthodox and folk Muslims view *barakah* differently. Orthodox Muslims believe blessings flow directly from Allah and cannot be manipulated and passed on to others. Folk Muslims consider *barakah* to be a magical force that cannot be induced by ritual and manipulated for human benefit. Orthodox Muslims believe that folk Muslims turn a personal spiritual power, which is based on a relationship with Allah, into an impersonal force."

Across all of the ethno-religious groups in Syria (Sunnites, Alawites, Druzes, Ismaelites, and Christians – the latter being divided into at least eleven different confessions) it is characteristic of holy places to have an 'owner', the so-called *ṣāḥib al-makān*. This figure can be male or female, a Biblical or Qur'anic character, such as Abraham, Job or Ṣāliḥ, or a (local) saint who was recalled from his or her mundane existence relatively recently and whose 'wondrous' deeds are remembered.[30]

Every single holy place is connected with one or more narratives which inform visitors or worshippers about the 'owner' and about the meaningful interrelation of topographical characteristics such as hot springs, bizarre groupings of trees, impressive rock formations and caves or strangely coloured patches of earth – all of which are typical for most of the pilgrimage sites in rural Syria. Such mythological legends always explain or clarify the topographical characteristics of a holy place in their mutual relation to, and not in isolation from, each other. They are the link between the *ṣāḥib al-makān* and 'his' place (or 'his' places).

The relation between these holy figures, the topographical characteristics and the mythological legend can be understood as mutually constitutive. On the one hand, the narrative clarifies why the particular topographical characteristics exist at the given place (i.e. it was Shaykh ʿĪsā who came to this place and transformed the formerly dangerous *jinn*-well into healing waters; it was Job who came to this place and left behind a foot print; it was the blood of murdered Abel which gave the earth its extraordinary colour).[31] On the other hand, the topographical characteristics of the holy place become a representation of the legend; they illustrate it, put it in concrete terms, and 'tell' it – and inasmuch as they do so, they also represent the respective 'owner'.

Epistemologically speaking, it is decisive that the pilgrims establish a causal relation between the *ṣāḥib al-makān* and the *baraka* extant at the holy place. Through his or her unique acts, the 'owner' generated *baraka* in his lifetime; at the same time he or she transmits *baraka* to the pilgrims who are seeking help. *Baraka* is thought to be an *exclusively positive* force and this characteristic trait bestows upon *baraka* a unique rank: it is of divine origin – from an emic perspective as well.

In contrast to other regions (such as the Maghreb[32]), *baraka* is not thought to be genealogically inheritable within the Syrian local cultural context. In Syria, there

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30 Generally speaking, the interviewees stated that the 'owner' is present at the holy place. Yet this presence refers to the *rūḥ* of the 'owner' – and not to his physical remains. The tombs at the holy places are merely a material symbol for the *rūḥ* of the 'owner' and for his metaphysical presence. The existence of a tomb is not evident in every holy place in Syria. In many cases, the tombs have only been built in recent years or decades. Cf. Fartacek, *Pilgerstätten*, 168, 203.

31 Fartacek, *Pilgerstätten*, 65-66, 88, 139.

32 Cf. Gellner, *Muslim Society*; Mohamed Kerrou, L'*autorité des saints: Perspectives historiques et socio-anthropologiques en Méditerranée occidentale*, Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations 1998; Houari Touati, *Entre Dieu et les hommes. Lettrés, saints et sorciers au Maghreb (17° siècle),*

are no 'maraboutic' families who are venerated as holders of *baraka* and who enjoy high social prestige.[33] Rather, *baraka* is seen as a force which can be acquired through particular ritual practices at holy places.

After these general remarks regarding *baraka* in the context of the constitutive traits of holy places, we want to turn to the question of the relation between, on the one hand, local cultural pilgrimage and, on the other, the social order in the sense of common shared norms and values: how is *baraka* efficacious in respect of the extant socio-cultural and social status quo? Does *baraka* serve as the affirmation or rather as the transformation of existing values and norms? Does *baraka* have a more conservative or a more innovative leaning?

In order to answer these questions, we want to take a closer look at our ethnographic data:

a) The goals and wishes which the pilgrims connect with the acquisition of baraka *conform to the norms and values of society*

Al-baraka bi-tzīd al-khayr – *baraka* increases goodness! On more than one occasion, we heard this general statement during the course of our data collection. Specifically, the following characteristics and effects are attributed to *baraka* in the context of local cultural pilgrimage from an emic perspective:

baraka *increases fertility* (khuṣūba)

– this applies to the multiplication of (according to the context) 'useful' and socially respected life; *baraka* is about the fertility of fields, gardens, fruit trees, sheep and other livestock. Especially frequent are visits of holy places in the case of childlessness: *baraka* aids the procreation of *socially desirable* children, i.e. matrimonial and healthy - and possibly male - offspring.

baraka *increases generosity* (karam)

– numerous statements of our interview partners made it clear that the fertility generated through *baraka* is not meant to aid the egoistic enrichment of individuals, i.e. they took for granted that there was an intimate connection between the acquisition of *baraka* and the virtue of generosity.

Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales 1994; Abdelahad Sebti, "Au Maroc : sharifisme citadin, charisme et historiographie", *Annales E.S.C.* 2 (1986), 433-457; Mondher Kilani, *La construction de la mémoire. Le lignage et la sainteté dans l'oasis d' El Ksar*, Geneva: Labor et Fides 1992; Biancamaria Scarcia and Laura Bottini, eds, *The Role of the Sādāt/Ašrāf in Muslim History and Civilization*, Proceedings of the International Colloquium Rome 2-4/1998. *Oriente Moderno 2* (1999).

33 A certain exception to this rule are '(holy) fools', i.e. the so-called *mukhāwi*s or *majdhūb*s who occasionally can be found at holy places and sometimes are considered to be holders of *baraka* (cf. the explanations below about the metaphorical equivalence of holiness and extraordinary forms of being).

baraka *increases the ability to forgive* (musāmaḥa) *and to show remorse* (tawba)

– there is an intimate connection between generosity and the potential to forgive one's fellow men and to reconcile with them. In light of this, *baraka* from an emic perspective aids sincere remorse and forgiveness; it represents an important tool for the individual and/or collective management of conflicts.[34]

baraka *gives inner strength, self-confidence and health*

– these characteristics more or less are a precondition for the already mentioned points. Successful procreation and the management of conflicts in the sense of a win-win solution (according to local norms and values) imply strength and self-confidence. Over and over again, our interviewees underlined the fact that the *baraka* extant at holy places was helpful against spiritual and emotional problems (*mashākil rūḥāniyya; mashākil nafsiyya*) and in the case of depression. Moreover, they emphasized that *baraka* contributed to them making the 'right' decisions. It is striking that they also mentioned in this context that *baraka* gave people guidance in cases where they had religious doubts.

baraka *provides protection against dangerous demons* (jinn)
and against the effects of the Evil Eye (ḥasad)

– Thus, logically *baraka* is conceptualized as a force that opposes all those entities which seek to divert people from the straight path and which strive to make mischief among the people.[35]

At least in the context of local-culture pilgrimage, Sunnites, Alawites, Druzes, Ismaelites and members of the different Christian confessions seem to agree with each other to a large extent as regards the characteristics attributed to *baraka* mentioned above. These characteristics not only concern the constitutive traits of holy places *per se*, but also bear upon the expectations and motivations which the pilgrims connect with the visiting of holy places.

In short, people visit holy places because they have problems in their everyday lives; they wish to improve their personal life-situation. Thus it is worthwhile to emphasize that people usually feel inadequate when they visit a holy place with a specific concern, and they make an effort at not falling short of the social ideals. Seen from the perspective of conflict theory, the above-mentioned attributes of *baraka*, and thus the expectations, wishes, and goals of the pilgrims, are therefore *norm-conformant.*

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[34] In former times, holy places fulfilled an important function as asylums (*ḥimā*) where people could seek refuge and were safe from persecution. According to our interviewees, even today people seek refuge at holy places after disputes. Yet, speaking in diachronic terms, the relevance of holy places in respect of *conflicts of interest* decreases whereas they become more important for solving *conflicts of values*.

[35] Fartacek, *Unheil durch Dämonen*, 132-152.

During the course of our data collection (*case-reconstructive research*; see footnote 2), it became strongly evident that the pilgrims to a large extent comply with the social ideals embodied in norms and values and that the ideals themselves are not questioned. This is corroborated by the pilgrims' feelings of inadequacy: after all, feeling inadequate implies recognizing the criteria that must be met for a life to be considered successful. This allows us to state that pilgrimage serves the attainment of goals which conform to the common shared local-culture norms and that the social order *per se* is not questioned by local pilgrimage.[36]

b) Within the narratives, it is typical of the 'owners' of holy places to perform dissociative acts: the ṣāḥib al-makān *generates* baraka *through breaking with his social environment for the sake of God*

In the following, it is essential to cast a brief glance at the so-called 'owners' of the holy places as well as at the narratives that surround these figures. As regards these (mythological) figures who generate and mediate *baraka*, it must be underlined that the narratives which are passed on about these figures tell life-stories in which *baraka* results from dissociative acts: the *ṣāḥib al-makān* is characteristically connected with having ignored or transgressed the norms and values of his social environment. The history of salvation provides numerous illustrious examples: Noah, Abraham, Elias, Ṣāliḥ, Hūd, Jesus (etc.) – all of them are united by the fact that they were not pragmatists and they did not just acquiesce to the social and religious order and the situation of their times. All of them have 'their' places in the rural areas of Syria and in other regions where they are presently the destination of pilgrimage.[37]

We must also not neglect the fact that pilgrims and grave keepers pass on narratives about figures who are noncompliant and 'rebellious' or 'revolutionary'. The decisive point is *not* whether and the extent to which these narratives correspond to *historical facts*; rather these narratives are illuminating as to the way the pilgrims *construct* these figures.[38]

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[36] This also holds true in cases where holy places are visited out of thankfulness to God (for having reached a desired *status quo*).

[37] Regarding the ethno-religious segmentation of present-day Syrian society, it is worthwhile underlining that many of these mythological figures have a markedly interreligious significance: they play a central (mythological) role within *all* of the mentioned religious communities. Thus they refer to a common shared religious heritage amongst Christians, Sunnites, Alawites, Ismaelites and Druzes – and even a common shared knowledge concerning *baraka* and its effectiveness.

[38] A connection between *baraka* and *dissociation* has sometimes been deduced from the Qur'anic narratives about Abraham. Evidence for this is provided by al-Ghazālī's thoughts about "the arguments of those who tend to prefer the withdrawal from society [to social life]" (*dhikr ḥujaj al-mā'ilīna ilā tafḍīl al-ʿuzla*): "They [i.e. those who prefer the withdrawal] have used as an argument the [following] word of God where He tells about Abraham [= Q 19:48]: 'I shall withdraw from you and that unto which ye pray beside God, and I shall pray

c) Pilgrims' religious practices: dissociation as a tool for the ritual transmission of baraka

If one turns from the conceptual to the ritual level, the question arises as to what the pilgrims actually do at holy places and how prevalent norms and values are 'processed' during the pilgrimage rituals.

At holy places, a whole range of rituals can be observed that serve the acquisition of *baraka*: the pilgrims circumambulate and kiss the grave of the 'owner'; they share their pilgrimage meal with other pilgrims; they roll rocks over themselves and over each other; they eat soil from the holy place. Furthermore *baraka* can be transmitted via the exchange of images, as happens at the grave of Saint George at Azraʿ: the pilgrim leaves behind an image in the burial chamber and in exchange takes home another image that has already been resting there for some time and has thus been 'charged' with *baraka*. An alternative form of ritualized *baraka*-transmission consists of pilgrims leaving behind personal items of clothing in the burial chamber with the intention of picking them up again after some time when they have been charged with *baraka* by virtue of them having rested at the holy place.

Baraka is furthermore acquired through acts of humility such as when pilgrims lick the threshold to the burial chamber or approach the shrine on their knees. This ties in with accounts by our interviewees who more than once stated that it was essential to do something *mū ʿādī* ("not normal") in order to acquire *baraka*.

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unto my Lord' and so forth until the end of the verse. And then He said [= Q 19:49]: 'So, when he had withdrawn from them and that which they were worshipping beside God, We gave him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We made a Prophet.' [They used these verses as an argument in favour of their withdrawal] insofar as they insinuated that all of this was due to the *baraka* that lies in the withdrawal from society (*barakat al-ʿuzla*) – and this [argument] is weak, for it is of no use whatsoever to interact and mix with the *unbelievers*, except for [that this allows for] calling them to the true religion. Thus if one fails in this respect, nothing else remains but to withdraw from them and abandon them (*hajruhum*). Yet here [i.e. in respect of the kind of withdrawal with which al-Ghazālī is dealing in his text] we are talking about interacting with the *Muslims* and about the *baraka* that lies *herein* [and *not* about interacting with the unbelievers, i.e. if they fall back on the story of Abraham, then they are missing the point]."

Iḥtajjū bi-qawlihī taʿālā ḥikāyatan ʿan Ibrāhīma ʿalayhi s-salāmu: ʿwa-aʿtazilukum wa-mā tadʿūna min dūni llāhi wa-adʿū rabbī…al-āyatu' thumma qāla taʿāla: 'fa-lammā ʿtazalahum wa-mā yaʿbudūna min dūni llāhi wahabnā lahū Isḥāqa wa-Yaʿqūba wa-kullan jaʿalnā nabiyyan' ishāratan ilā anna dhālika bi-barakati l-ʿuzlati wa-hādhā ḍaʿīfun li-anna mukhālaṭata l-kuffāri lā fā'idata fihā illā daʿwatahum ilā d-dini wa-ʿinda l-ya'si min ijābatihim fa-lā wajha illā hajruhum wa-innamā l-kalāmu fi mukhālaṭati l-muslimina wa-mā fihā mina l-baraka. Cf. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn (= Kitāb ādāb al-ʿuzla*), vol. 2, ed. Badawī Ṭabāna, Samārāngh (Semarang, Indonesia) 1377/1957, 221-241, here 224-225.

Of major interest in this context is the expression *barakat al-ʿuzla*. The lexeme *ʿuzla* denotes "seclusion", "detachedness", "retreat" (or similar) – it thus comes close to what we call 'breaking with social norms' in this article. In this context, it is important to note that al-Ghazālī uses *hajr* here as a synonym for *ʿuzla* (cf. the quotation above), i.e. he establishes an association with the *hijra*, i.e. Muḥammad's 'repetition' of the dissociation put into practice by Abraham in relation to his social environment.

Such an 'inversion of normality' becomes particularly manifest in the context of vows which are intimately connected with *baraka*.

In the frame of local pilgrimage, making a vow (*nadhr*, pl. *nudhūr*) is tantamount to making a contract (*ʿaqd*, pl. *ʿuqūd*) between the pilgrim and the *ṣāḥib al-makān* (or God). The pilgrim thereby asks the mythological person for help regarding a concrete problem – be it a difficult exam, a particularly intricate conflict situation or a physical ailment. In return, the pilgrim promises to carry out an act of sacrifice which is due *only when* the desired result has come true.[39] The most common form of return service consists of the sacrifice of an animal (ram; cock). Furthermore, there are also instances of what might be termed 'material sacrifices' such as the donation of equipment to the sanctuary. Yet in the context of cases which are deemed especially severe, or of wishes, the realization of which seems virtually impossible, they demand the payment of a particularly high price: the latter normally consists of pilgrims carrying out extraordinary ritual practices that require self-humiliation (*tanāzul*) or estrangement on his or her part.

According to our interviewees, it is necessary in the context of the fulfilment of vows to do something that would not be considered 'normal' in daily life and which contradicts the expectations and demands of 'normality'. In respect of the fulfilment of vows, this can be illustrated clearly by the following examples:[40]

- Pilgrims vow to travel to a holy place on foot whereby the difficulty may be increased through the vow to kneel down after every step.
- Pilgrims vow to go begging for a specified time (whereby a 'symbolic' amount of money is involved which is defined when the vow is made).
- In the case of childlessness, pilgrims may vow to give the dearly wished-for child a name uncommon in their own ethnic-religious community (such as when a Christian child is named Muḥammad or a Sunni child is named George).

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39 It is considered important that this contract covers all details. Making a vow has to comprise an exact declaration of the wish and a specification of the return service in terms of place, time and content. Once a vow has been made it cannot be changed again – under any circumstances! In other words: the person who makes a vow (*ṣāḥib al-nadhr*) has to be aware of what he or she wants and what he or she can contribute to the materialisation of the wish and which concrete changes must happen in order for the wish to be fulfilled – and for the return services to become due. From an anthropological perspective this concretisation – what exactly do I want – is already an important step within the process of conflict resolution. From an emic viewpoint, this concretisation corresponds to the features of *baraka* which support human beings in clarifying problems, values and life-goals (cf. Gebhard Fartacek, "Kullnā miṯl baʿḍ! Heilige Orte, ethnische Grenzen und die Bewältigung alltäglicher Probleme in Syrien", *Anthropos* 106 (2011), 1-17, here 10-12).

40 For further and similar examples see Frederick Jones Bliss, *The Religions of Modern Syria and Palestine,* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1912, 27 ff.; Taufiq Canaan, "Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Land der Bibel", in: *Abhandlungen des Hamburger Kolonialinstituts* 20, Reihe B: *Völkerkunde, Kulturgeschichte und Sprachen*, vol. 12, Hamburg 1914, 72; Taufiq Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine,* London: Luzac & Co 1927, 130-193.

– Pilgrims repeatedly told us that it was common in the context of the *fulfilment* of vows to travel to a pilgrimage site administered by another ethno-religious group, a visit to which was 'not normal' for their own ethno-religious group.

In short: according to the statements of our interviewees, there seems to be a clear connection between the *transmission of baraka* and the *fulfilment of vows*[41] on the one hand, and carrying out an act which is associated with the *inversion of the normality* of everyday life on the other. There is good evidence of sacrifice rituals that symbolize a break with everyday life – regardless of whether they are about breaking with specific social roles, or transgressing social stratifications or ethno-religious divisions.

The transgression of ethno-religious boundaries: brief comments

Regardless of the fact that our empirical material (based on participant observation) allows us to state that the vast majority of pilgrimage sites are frequented in full respect of ethno-religious divisions and that Alawites, Druzes, Ismaelites, Sunnites and Christians all have their 'own' pilgrimage sites,[42] the pilgrims emphasized that the holy place in question was visited by *all* religious communities. This is corroborated by the sentence *kullnā mithl baʿḍ* [We are all (of) equal (value)!] which was regularly uttered by the pilgrims and the grave keepers when we asked about the interactions between the different ethno-religious groups at the holy place in question.[43]

Mostly, they continued along the line of: 'In our everyday lives, we don't have too much contact with each other. But here, at the holy place, there is an exceptional situation. We come from different parts of Syria or even different parts of

41 At this point we want to reiterate that there is a strong connection between the acquisition of *baraka* and the making/fulfilment of vows. This interrelation becomes evident in the pilgrims' ritual practices outlined here as well as in their (normative) intentions. In both cases people strive for an improvement of their life situation and both are about successfully coping with individual and collective conflicts. Visiting holy places, acquiring *baraka* and making/fulfilling vows are not ends in themselves.

42 Regardless of the aforementioned shared beliefs and practices in respect of local pilgrimage, one can easily recognize to which ethno-religious group a particular pilgrimage site belongs. The vast majority of local sanctuaries are visited exclusively by one ethno-religious group and only in exceptional cases do people from different religious communities visit the same site. This aligns with the observation that holy places play their due role as markers of collective identity. It is impossible to capture the whole range of symbolic occupations of topographic space which have taken place lately. To name but a few: (1) large-sized crucifixes on top of the Qalamūn-mountains; (2) the omnipresence of the *Ḥudūd al-kubarā' al-khamsa*, i.e. the green-red-yellow-blue-white flag of the Druzes on the peaks of the Jabal al-ʿArab; (3) the obviously politically inspired installation of Sunni mosques complete with minarets next to Alawite shrines in Jabal Lādhiqiyya – the latter of which we observed between 2003 and 2010.

43 Fartacek, "Kullnā miṯl baʿḍ!", 14.

the world. There are no problems between us!' Bearing in mind that such statements may be triggered to a certain extent by the situation of ethnographic fieldwork and that political and pragmatic reasons may play a role in them,[44] it nevertheless seems possible to contend that this emphasis on the *inter*-ethnic relevance of holy places in important respects has to do with the *cognitive construction* of such places – and thus with the local cultural conceptions of *baraka* in present-day Syria. As will be outlined in the following section, both ethno-religious boundaries and their ritual transgression are part and parcel of local pilgrimage in Syria.

Conformance and dissociation: theory-based remarks on liminality and the inversion of normality

So far ethnographic material has been presented in order to convey an idea of the characteristic features of local pilgrimage, the transmission of *baraka* and the norms and values connected herewith. At first glance a number of the points presented above seem to contradict each other. Accordingly, the next part of our considerations aims at developing an explanatory model that – falling back on social-anthropological theory – establishes a meaningful relation between these seemingly inconsistent points and manages to integrate them in a stringent way. Before this, we shall briefly recapitulate what has been said so far:

a) In the frame of local pilgrimage in present-day Syria, pilgrims visit holy places in order to acquire *baraka*. They seek to acquire *baraka* with the intention of standing their ground in life and being valuable and respected members of society. This implies that by visiting holy places they provide evidence that they comply with dominant norms and values. Hence, seen from an epistemological perspective, *baraka* is something akin to a *medicine*: people want their everyday social lives to be 'intact' and they do not want them to be 'damaged'. They want mischief, failure, and uncertainty to be 'healed' – and *baraka* promises to effect that. In the end, it is all about living in conformance with and reconciling with society, about removing possible inadequacies.

b) At the same time, holy places are conceptually linked with religious figures who stand out as having – according to the narratives – maintained rather strained relations with their social and religious environment: their life-stories are marked by *dissociation*, i.e. they broke with their social and religious environment for the sake of drawing nearer to God.

c) As norm-conformant as the goals of the pilgrims may be, within the ritual practices that they carry out at holy places, *dissociative elements* play a decisive role. In fact, people do things at pilgrimage sites which they would not easily

44 Fartacek, "Kullnā miṯl baʿḍ!", 15.

do in their everyday lives, i.e. they do things which are not 'normal' – and they ascribe much value to them (self-humiliation; transgression of the social and ethno-religious boundaries).

Focussing on these different dimensions of *baraka* (a + b + c), it seems that *baraka*[45] in fact 'exists' in two different modes: one dimension (a) is related to the expectations and the goals that pilgrims connect with the acquisition of *baraka* at holy places and that may be comprehended as a *norm-conformant mode*; the two other dimensions (b + c) are related to the narratives about the 'owners' of the holy places and to pilgrims' ritual practices. These dimensions can be identified with break and *dissociation* – i.e. as a dissociative mode. These markedly opposed dimensions of *baraka* will be depicted schematically in the following way:

***baraka* as a power which conforms to prevalent norms and values (norm-conformant mode)**	***baraka* as a power which is linked with the breaking of prevalent norms and values (dissociative mode).**
expectations, wishes and goals of the people who visit holy places for religious reasons (a)	*narratives concerning the 'owners' of holy places* (b)
	pilgrims' ritual practices (c)

The analysis of these empirical findings can be furthered on the basis of anthropological theory: our ethnographic data regarding the generation and transmission of *baraka* at holy places recalls, on the one hand, Edmund Leach's borderline concept, and the concept of anti-structure or *communitas* elaborated by Vic-

[45] It is important to note here that we are referring to the *local* conception of *baraka* in the frame of the Syrian pilgrimage system and its epistemological foundations and not to the scriptural conceptions of *baraka* developed within relatively autonomous scholastic and religious fields.
However, a dissociative notion of *baraka* is also discussed in Islamic theology – in a specific way. In this context it is worthwhile to turn once more to the passage by al-Ghazālī presented above (cf. footnote 37). As has been said, al-Ghazālī critically examines the arguments of actors in the religious field who withdrew from society and evidently not only did so by referring to the *baraka* contained therein (*barakat al-ʿuzla*), but thereby fell back on the Qur'anic narratives centred upon Abraham by suggesting that these narratives are about *dissociation*. We want to underline once more that the passage by al-Ghazālī presented above provides indirect evidence of the fact that many people were emphatically aware of the element of dissociation contained e.g. in the narratives about Abraham. Further, al-Ghazālī himself argues during the course of his critique that it is not the element of dissociation *as such* that is problematic, but the fact that the actors criticized by him undertake dissociation in respect of the *wrong things*, i.e., al-Ghazālī suggests that the element of dissociation that these figures highlight within the Abraham narratives is falsely applied by them: they have adopted it as a guiding principle for their actions in the wrong social context. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī insists on a qualitative distinction between two kinds of dissociation: dissociation is preferable ('the right thing to do') if put into practice in respect of stubborn unbelievers, and this is what Abraham himself did; in respect of a Muslim social environment, the principle of dissociation must be practised in a more cautious way. Yet the form of dissociation criticized by al-Ghazālī evidently owes much to the fact that the narratives about Abraham *do* in fact carry such a moment of dissociation, but one which – in al-Ghazālī's opinion – is decontextualized and thus applied in a problematic way.

tor Turner on the other. Furthermore it is possible for us to tie in our research with constructivist concepts which can be applied above in respect of the thematic of uncertainty and pilgrims' coping strategies.[46]

Generally speaking, the borderline concept, or the concept of the inversion of normality, seems to have considerable explanatory value for the collected data. This becomes particularly evident in light of the fact that pilgrims obviously establish a significant relation between *holiness* and *strangeness/estrangement* and consider the two to be metaphorical equivalents.[47] These interrelations are palpable both in a mythological respect (*ṣāḥib al-makān*) and in the context of dissociative rituals connected with the transmission of *baraka* and the fulfilment of vows.

What has been said so far makes it clear that the polarity of holy places and everyday life plays an important role in the case of local pilgrimage. When pilgrims relate how practices that are *mū ʿādī* – i.e. 'not normal' – are carried out at the holy place, this reflects the fact that everyday life is to be considered as the norm – and that *this* normality is inverted at holy places. To put it differently: what really counts in the context of *baraka* are not the holy places *as such*, but the *relation* between holy place and everyday life.[48] We are convinced that holy places – and *baraka* – cannot be analysed adequately as long as the relation between holy place and everyday life is neglected. The relation between holy place and everyday life evidently bears upon the interplay of healing and (social) misfortune, i.e., this relation has to do with the fundamental need of pilgrims to cope with the potentially threatening aspects of their everyday lives – whereby different forms of conflict and the fear of failure explicitly surface here. Against this backdrop, we contend that the inversion of normality so characteristic of holy places is not only essential for the generation of *baraka*, but furthermore – in the form of pilgrimage rituals – is of paramount importance for the healing effects of *baraka*. It is considered responsible for *baraka*'s ability to unfold its efficaciousness as a medicine in pilgrims' everyday lives.

As to the relation between holy place and everyday life which is the focus here, we deem it worthwhile to resort to the theoretical work of Victor Turner and his

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46 Cf. Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Geschichten und Diskurse. Abschied vom Konstruktivismus*, Reinbeck: Rowohlt 2003; as for dealing with negatively experienced contingency see Jürgen Straub, *Erzählung. Identität und historisches Bewusstsein. Die psychologische Konstruktion von Geschichte. Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität 1*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1998; for a discussion of the compatibility of structuralist and constructivist approaches see Fartacek, *Unheil durch Dämonen*, 27-31.

47 Edmund Leach, *Kultur und Kommunikation. Zur Logik symbolischer Zusammenhänge*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1978, 47-53.

48 During the course of our fieldwork it became evident that the importance of this relation is also reflected in the emic way of thinking: pilgrims vehemently and repeatedly emphasized that a holy place only remains holy as long as people actually visit this place in order to obtain *baraka* or to make/fulfil vows (vgl. Fartacek, *Pilgerstätten*, 175). This is remarkable because, obviously, the pilgrims dismiss an 'objectivist' notion of holiness in the sense of *Heiligkeit an sich*.

two terms of *structure* and *anti-structure*. What does Turner – whose works are a major contribution to the study of ritual and pilgrimage processes – try to capture with these two terms? Regarding *structure*, Turner explains it as

> […] a more or less distinctive arrangement of mutually dependent institutions and the institutional organization of social positions and/or actors which they imply. Class structures are only one species of structures so defined, and a measure of alienation adheres to all, including so-called tribal structures, insofar as they all tend to produce distance and inequality, often leading to exploitation between man and man, man and woman, and old and young.[49]

Evidently, Victor Turner's understanding of *structure* enables us to adequately capture essential characteristics of the pilgrims' everyday lives, although in the case of Syria the 'structure immanent' segmentation of society along ethno-religious lines must be added.

What about the term *anti-structure* and its manifestation – i.e. *communitas*? Turner coined the term *anti-structure* in order to conceptualize a particular kind of social interrelatedness that differs in important respects from what he termed *structure*. For Turner, *communitas* is an "[…] undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational, existential, I-Thou (in Feuerbach's and Buber's sense) relationship." And: "Communitas is spontaneous, immediate, concrete – it is not shaped by norms, it is not institutionalized, it is not abstract."[50]

In respect of ethno-religious diversity in present-day Syria, we consider it worthwhile to stress that Turner always insisted on the fact that *communitas* "does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms, though this is necessarily a transient condition if society is to continue to operate in an orderly fashion."[51]

Structural and anti-structural modes of baraka

Against the theoretical background outlined here, in the following we want to return to the topic of *baraka* and to the relation between holy place and everyday life. As has been said, it is possible to identify two contrary modes of *baraka* on the basis of the empirical data. As for the maintenance and the redefinition of

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49 Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press 1974, 272.

50 Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 274; cf. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play,* New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982, 20-60. For a fruitful discussion of Turner's – often unjustly criticized – theory see, Bobby C. Alexander, "Correcting Misinterpretations of Turner's Theory: An African-American Pentecostal Illustration", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30 (1991), 26-44. For an example of the ambivalent reception of Turner's achievements consult John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds, *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2000.

51 Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 274.

norms and values, one of these two modes has a *norm-conformant* effect, the other a *dissociative* one. If we focus upon the reasons which the pilgrims give for seeking to acquire *baraka* as well as upon the expectations connected with this, the acquisition of *baraka* – which here appears in its norm-conformant mode – relates to what Victor Turner conceptualized in the term *structure.* That is, the pilgrims' usage of *baraka* 'makes sense' in relation to *structure* (which belongs to everyday life).

This is corroborated by the fact that pilgrimage is primarily about coping with life, and accordingly the goals of pilgrimage are informed by *structure*: the pilgrims want to be *successful* members of their society; they do not want to be at the *bottom* of the social hierarchy or occupy inferior positions; they want to have (legitimate) children; they want to be healthy and respected (etc.).

Further evidence of the fixed mutual relation between this *norm-conformant* mode of *baraka* and *structure* is provided by the fact that the pilgrims regard *baraka* as an efficient remedy against the Evil Eye. In Syria and the entire region of the Middle East, the triggering of the Evil Eye is associated with social envy (cf. the lexeme *ḥasad*, 'envy', which serves as a synonym for the phenomenon of the Evil Eye). As such, the Evil Eye is the (psychological) product of an everyday world characterized by inequality, hierarchy and the social rivalries that result from these. To put it more plainly: if *baraka* is said to be an effective and preventive defence against the Evil Eye, the intimate connection between the norm-conformant mode of *baraka* and *structure* becomes particularly apparent.

In contradistinction to this norm-conformant mode of *baraka*, we can also make out a *dissociative* mode which is characterised by a break with social conventions. This dissociative mode of *baraka* becomes manifest in the narratives that deal with the lives and acts of the mythological figures. Beyond the mythological entities who generate and transmit *baraka* this mode also becomes palpable in specific pilgrimage rituals. Thus, if someone steps out of his or her social status during the course of specific pilgrimage rituals to symbolically turn into a beggar, or if in Syria, where ethno-religious segmentations are the rule, someone pilgrimages to a holy place that is normally frequented by 'the others' then on a small scale he or she is practising something which is dissociative in character.

Against the backdrop of Turner's terminology, we suggest classifying the *norm-conformant mode of baraka* as *structural* and the *dissociative mode of baraka* as *anti-structural.* The conceptual surplus of this reference to Turner (or the Manchester School of Social Anthropology) stems from the fact that the two explicated modes of *baraka* – according to the theoretical presuppositions of structure and anti-structure – are two complementary counterparts that presuppose each other. According to our understanding, *baraka per se* is neither structural nor anti-structural; rather it 'exists' in a structural and an anti-structural mode – depending on the reference level. The norm-conformant and power-maintaining leaning of *baraka* refers to the structure of the everyday world (→ structural mode); the

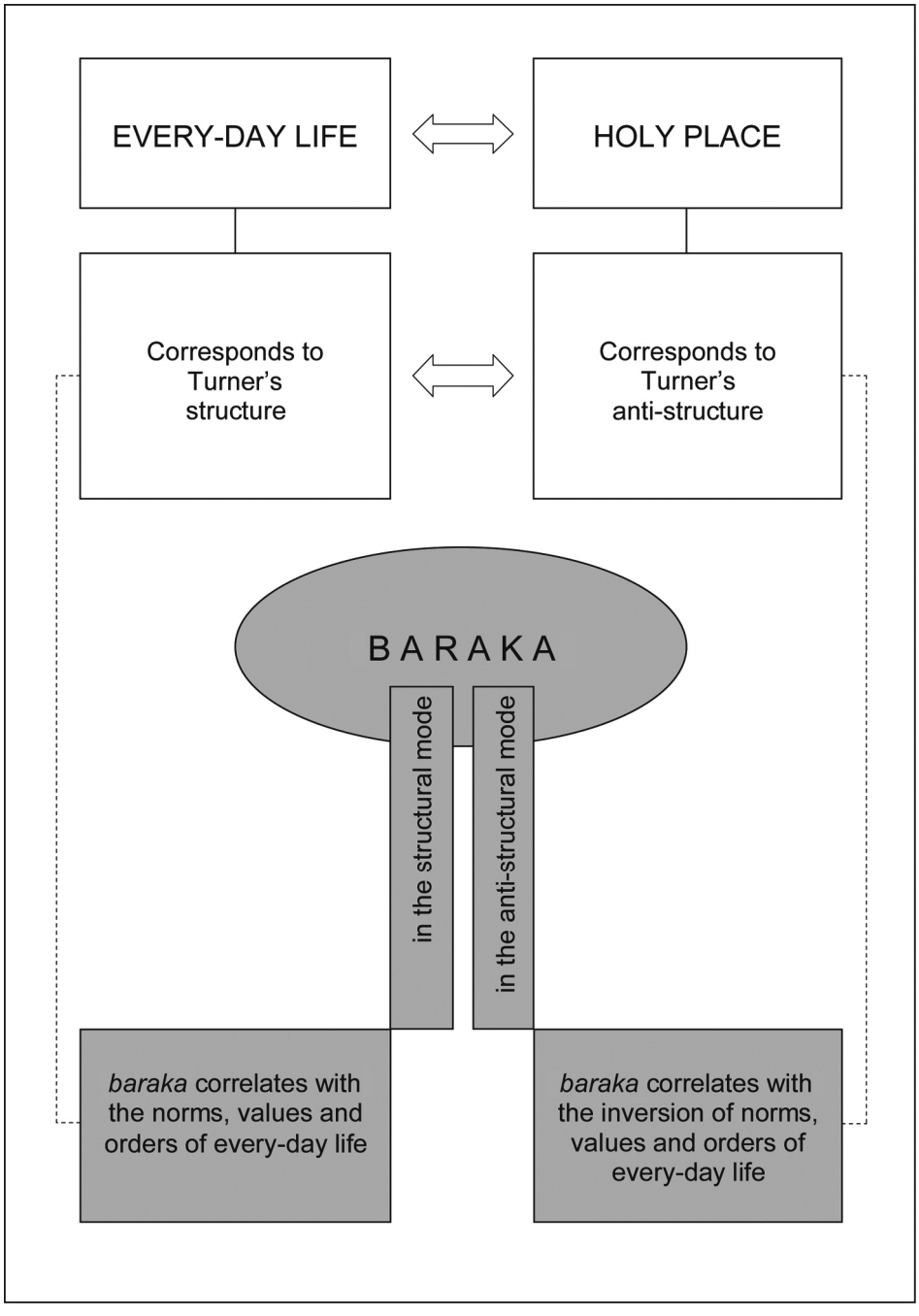

Figure 1: The structural and anti-structural mode of *baraka* with regards to existing social norms, values, and orders

dissociative nature and leaning of *baraka* towards 'breaking with social norms' refers to anti-structure which, according to social-anthropological theory, is decisive for the construct 'holy place' (→ anti-structural mode).

Thus, the complex interplay of 'conformance' and 'break' in the frame of local-cultural pilgrimage is *not* a contradiction; rather it is the expression of a setting of mutual relations that constitute the holy place on the one hand and everyday world on the other and that perpetuate the antagonistic relation between them. Insofar as our model refers to the borderline concept of Edmund Leach, it further allows us to establish metaphorical equivalences that, within the local cultural frame, are linked with the structural (norm-conformant) mode on the one hand, and with the anti-structural (dissociative) mode on the other. The previously outlined connection that emic thinking makes between extraordinary forms of being, dissociative strangeness, closeness to God, and holiness is given a theoretical framework in the sense of syntagmatic chains and paradigmatic associations.[52]

As for Turner's differentiation between spontaneous/existential, ideological and normative *communitas*, we think that *baraka* clearly shows 'ideological' traits in its anti-structural mode; this becomes evident in the extraordinary life stories of the mythological figures or in the often cited motto *kullnā mithl baʿḍ*. On the ritual level, though, *baraka* in this mode also includes spontaneous/existential *communitas* – such as when pilgrims interact with strangers or when they share their pilgrimage meals.[53]

Moreover, we want to stress that Turner's notion of *liminality* also fits well within the framework of our model. Turner later developed an understanding of *liminality* according to which *liminality* "refer[s] to any condition outside, or on the peripheries of, everyday life […]."[54] He furthermore regarded *liminality* as a "sphere of action and thought rather than a social modality"[55] and he insisted that it must be differentiated from *communitas* insofar as it usually implies loneliness, the withdrawal of an individual from the social-structural matrix, and sometimes estrangement[56] (which is well reflected within mythological/hagiographic narratives).

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52 Cf. Leach, *Kultur und Kommunikation*, 90. In contrast to classical structuralism we think that the establishment of metaphorical equivalences has to be documented from an emic standpoint. From a constructivist perspective, syntagmatic chains and paradigmatic associations can only be identified if they are based on emic explanatory models and levels of reference, i.e. if they refer to the local way of thinking. In this context local terminology, classifications and etymological connections have particular importance.

53 However, due to the lack of institutionalisation of local pilgrimage, we surmise that Turner's notion of *normative communitas* is only of limited importance.

54 Cf. Turner, *Dramas*, 53.

55 Cf. Turner, *Dramas*, 53.

56 Cf. Turner, *Dramas*, 53.

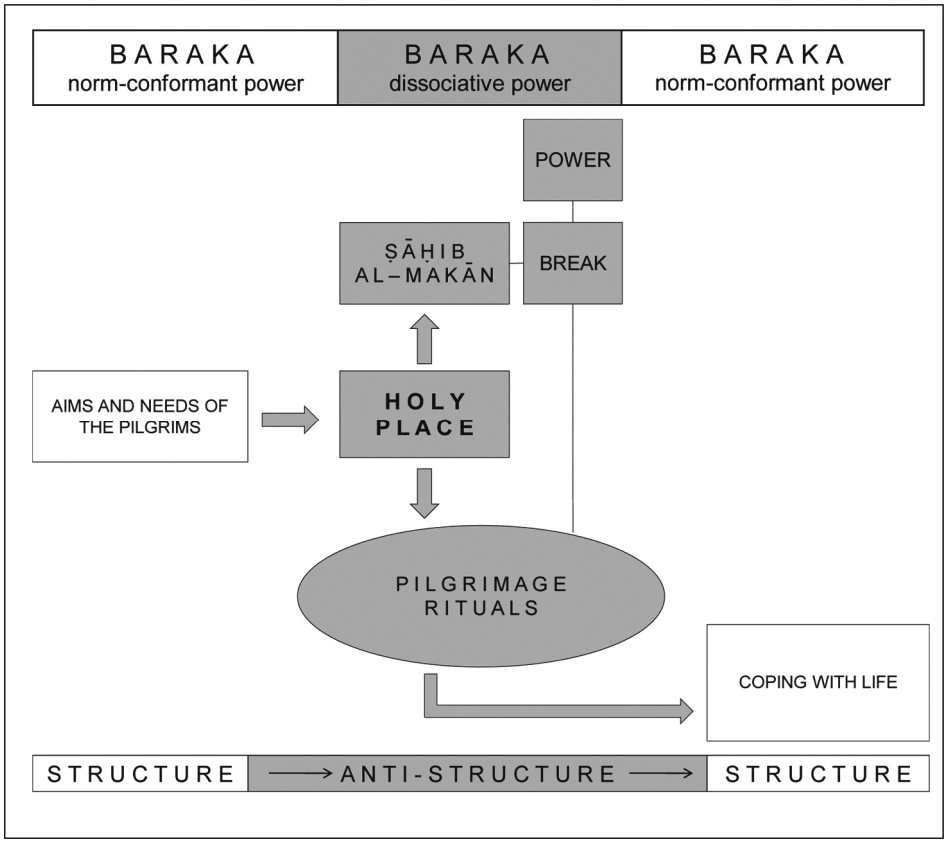

Figure 2: The functional interrelation between the different modes of *baraka* in the frame of local pilgrimage in Syria

We think that the healing effects of *baraka* – healing understood in a very broad sense that includes the alleviation of social conflicts – stem from the fact that the anti-structural mode of *baraka* fundamentally and emphatically rests on questioning virtually everything (at the holy place) which is of priority in the sphere of structure. Whoever pilgrimages to a holy place, turns to the *ṣāḥib al-makān*, in the end he turns to God; and whoever turns to God, epistemologically speaking, must be willing to disregard the goals, hierarchies and positions of everyday life, i.e., drawing near to God requires a worshipper to regard 'profane' things as inferior and to nourish the conviction that they create distance between God and the individual believer. Thus the break with structure can be understood as the precondition par excellence for achieving closeness to God. To put it more explicitly: it seems possible to state that *baraka* 'works' precisely on account of the fact that structure is ritually dispossessed of its relevance in the frame of local pilgrimage; and precisely because and insofar as this is the case, pilgrims draw near to God

who, in the end, is the only source of healing and the absolute authority that is able to provide *every* individual the justification of his or her existence.[57]

Conclusion

In our opinion, the theory-based identification of *baraka*'s two modes of operation as it has been presented in this article enables us to better understand what is hidden behind the phrase *'min shān al-baraka'*. The fact that *baraka* is related to the societal order in both a norm-conformant and a dissociative way is of essential importance when it comes to epistemologically grasping what *baraka* 'is'. With all of this in mind, we now want to investigate a number of subject areas which might be seen in a new light in conjunction with our proposed differentiation between a structural and an anti-structural mode of *baraka*.

1. *In the framework of local pilgrimage a structural and an anti-structural mode of* baraka *interlocks in a complementary way. Ultimately it is this interplay that provides a positive condition for healing and conflict resolution.*

If a person or social relations are to be healed, then the principle of reconciliation and reintegration into society is essential. Yet this principle alone is not sufficient; beyond this, the existing norms and order have to be questioned and analysed with the intention of capturing the *causes* of conflict and establishing a better society. It is precisely these two principles that are combined in the local concept of *baraka*-transmission. Seen from this perspective, it is simply wrong to reduce healing and the actual resolution of conflicts through *baraka* to a mere placebo effect; the success and efficacy of *baraka* rather find their explanation in the viable interplay that brings together social stability (structural mode) and forward-looking vision (anti-structural mode).

2. *The suspension of everyday-life categories related to the anti-structural mode of* baraka *generates strength.*

As has already been mentioned, people who seek healing at a holy place often feel weak and inadequate. In respect of the ritual efficacy of *baraka*, however, the very same everyday-life categories, according to which concrete individuals are classified as 'losers', have no validity at holy places – or acquire an opposite meaning, according to the anti-structural mode of *baraka*. Seen this way, it is a logical consequence that – ritually speaking – strength is generated through self-humiliation and estrangement.

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[57] Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Meditationen. Kritik der scholastischen Vernunft*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1999, 308.

3. *The anti-structural mode of* baraka *increases the value of social outsiders. Local pilgrimage harbours the potential to integrate individuals who differ from the rest.*

The interplay of the structural and anti-structural mode of *baraka* creates niches which enable people to behave differently from others and to experience their world differently due to a change of perspective. Concerning people who are marginalized within the societal order, who differ from and do not comply with the mainstream, or who are mentally ill or disabled – for all of these the anti-structural mode of *baraka* enables (ritual) integration and respect. It is as if the social pressure of being like everyone else is taken away from people through the anti-structural mode of *baraka*.

Moreover, the idea of a homogeneous society which rejects individuality is not absolute. At this point we can refer to the so-called *majdhūb*-paradigm[58], where the relation between 'madness' and *baraka* becomes manifest.

4. *(Ethno-religious) strangers at holy places are conceptualized and respected in terms of anti-structural* baraka *– the ethno-religious segmentation of everyday life is reproduced.*

The emphasis on the inter-ethnic relevance of sacred places – i.e. the often cited *kullnā mithl baʿḍ* – as well as rituals of ethno-religious estrangement, in the sense of an ideological *communitas*, represent an important part of the anti-structural mode of *baraka* in Syria. Yet given that the dissociation expressed in this mode of *baraka* is embedded in a structure of conformance to norms that belong to the everyday world, the existent ethno-religious segmentation of the everyday world is not softened. On the contrary: the ethno-religious diversity of the everyday world is needed, so that it can – at least in an ideological way – be transgressed at sacred places.

5. *The relation of every-day conformance (structural mode of* baraka*) and a form of* baraka *oriented towards dissociation (anti-structural mode of* baraka*) keeps the concept of holy places flexible. It enables the transformation and adaptability of local pilgrimage throughout different epochs.*

If, on the one hand, the acquisition of *baraka* goes hand in hand with norm-conformant expectations and is connected with the hope of standing one's ground in every-day life and, on the other, is generated through the conscious disregard for the norms and values of everyday life, then this embraces two aspects: (1) *baraka* is viable and meaningful to people trying to cope with their (everyday) life; (2)

58 Cf. Lorenz Nigst, *Legitime Nähe. Ibn Taymīyas theoretisches Konstrukt von den awliyāʾ Allāh*, Dissertation, Vienna 2011, 342-350; Lorenz Nigst, "'He would bite them really heavily': *Majdhūb*-saints in Maḥmūd Maqdish's *Nuzhat al-anẓār*", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 103 (2013), 267-297.

baraka must not be considered to embody socio-political stagnation; the *status quo* of society is not necessarily cemented through local pilgrimage. After all, in its anti-structural mode, *baraka* is responsible for the fact that the calling into question of the (social, cultural or religious) *status quo* has positive associations.

This leads us to the conclusion that the interplay of the structural and the anti-structural mode of *baraka* is responsible for the fact that *baraka* has been a successful instrument in helping pilgrims to cope with life and heal across all the different epochs. Such a conception of *baraka* implies a remarkable degree of adaptability to the changing life-situations and desires of people. Against this backdrop, local conceptions of *baraka* are far from being on the verge of disappearing today; on the contrary, local pilgrimage seems to be revitalized in the face of globalization.

However, the question arises what the future of these conceptions of *baraka* will be in the light of the ongoing Syrian war. After all, the ethno-religious tensions that are pushed to an extreme nowadays were all too obvious to an attentive observer of the so-called Arab Spring: evidently, some movements that took shape or gained momentum during the course of 2011, are prone to rather dogmatic and more rigid ways of religious thinking. Not in the least, they propagate an understanding of *baraka* which is radically different from the *baraka* experienced in the context of local pilgrimage: here, *baraka* is markedly "exclusivist" and rests on an in-group, kept as pure as possible through "orthopraxy" and strict adherence to a Wahhabi-inspired construct of Islam. Significantly, such an understanding of *baraka* denies "the others" any real meaning.

The Quest for Sufi Transmissions as Links to the Prophet: Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791) and his Encyclopedic Collections of Sufi *salāsil*

Stefan Reichmuth

Introduction

Since the 2nd and 3rd Islamic centuries, Sufis have often attempted to link their devotional activities to the model of the Prophet and his Companions. An early collector of Sufi biographies like al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) counts them in his "Classes of Sufis" (*Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*) among God's Friends (*awliyā'*), who in each generation were usually sent by Him after His Prophets to keep their community on track in words and deeds.[1] As the devotional attachment to the Prophet gained in importance in later medieval times, when he had come to be widely seen as the centre of the created cosmos and as a living reality for the believers, the significance of Sufi leaders for religious life increased in equal measure.[2]

By then it had become accepted practice among Sufis to go beyond the exclusive educational attachment to one Sufi shaykh and his community, and to look for affiliations to other masters and their ways. This search for different masters as sources of blessing (*baraka, tabarruk*) and guidance (*irshād*), and the collection of the garments (*khirqa*), which were usually awarded by them as tokens of performative initiation into their circle, came to be regarded as meritorious in Sufism after the establishment and subdivision of the Sufi *ṭuruq*.[3]

Beginning in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, and increasingly from the 15th century onwards, we see a new type of Sufi manual emerging. These manuals describe a variety of Sufi "ways" with their specific garments and practices of *dhikr*, and also list their different chains of affiliation which were collected by the authors and often traced back by them to pious Successors or Companions, or even to the Prophet himself. In these treatises, a genre which became increasingly common in the 17th and 18th centuries, the collection of Sufi chains of transmission (*salāsil*) shows obvious parallels with the practice established for the Prophetic Tradition

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1 Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya 1423/2003, 20.

2 Fritz Meier, "The Mystic Path", in: *The World of Islam. Faith. People. Culture*, Bernard Lewis, ed., London: Thames and Hudson 1976, 123 f.; Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Leiden: Brill 2000, 176 f.

3 Sg. *ṭarīqa*, originally denotes the Sufi "way". It was later also used for the organized Sufi community headed by a shaykh, as such often translated as "order" or "brotherhood".

(*ḥadīth*) with its required list of transmitters (*isnād*) leading back to the Prophet or his Companions (*ṣaḥāba*). The combined interest in *ḥadīth* and Sufi *salāsil* can be found in a good number of Sufi scholars and Traditionists.

What is the significance of this trend towards a summary and a, to a certain extent, historical presentation of Sufism and its multiple affiliations? Does it fall in line with other religious and intellectual developments? Do these collections indicate a desire to enhance religious authority? Do they reflect an increase in the general importance of Sufism, or rather a devaluation of the individual *ṭarīqa*? Are there apologetic motives behind the massive accumulation of God's blessings in these writings? Does the (re)construction of such links to the Prophet respond to pious concerns over the end of the Caliphal Age and over the growing distance from early Islamic times? This, at least, was the assumption of Louis Massignon, the first to deal at some length with some of these collections.[4]

Before we attempt to provide some initial answers to these questions, it will be helpful to first describe some of the major traits of this literary genre and its development. Our focus will then shift to the case study of Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), the famous lexicographer, *ḥadīth* scholar, and Sufi theologian of the late 12th/18th century who over the course of his career compiled three collections of Sufi *salāsil*. His texts can serve as an illustration of the development of this genre and of its functions in the pious and scholarly culture of the early modern period.

Major characteristics of the collections of Sufi salāsil between the 6th/12th and 12th /18th centuries

We are indebted to Denis Gril for the first detailed overview of this kind of literature about the different Sufi Ways and their transmission as *khirqa, dhikr* or *ṭarīqa*.[5] He concentrates mainly on the Arabic literature of Egypt and the Hijaz and on some later Ottoman Sufis of Turkish origin, and identifies a gradual development "from *khirqa* to *ṭarīqa*" in these treatises. The early focus on the *khirqa*,[6] the Sufi garment as a symbol of spiritual initiation, which was predominant in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, slowly gave way to a growing interest in the Sufi Ways in general, including their classification and their multiple transmissions. This shift of interest can be observed during the Ottoman period, especially from the 17th and

4 Louis Massignon, *La passion de Husayn Ibn Mansûr Hallâj. Martyr mystique de l'Islam executé à Bagdad le 26 mars 922. Étude d'Histoire Religieuse*, Paris: Gallimard 1975, vol. 2, 200.

5 Denis Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa:* continuité et évolution dans l'identification et la classification des voies", in: *Le soufisme à l'époque ottomane, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle/ Sufism in the Ottoman Era, 16th-18th century*, Rachida Chih and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, eds, Cairo: Institute français d'archéologie orientale 2010, 57-82.

6 See Jean-Louis Michon, "Khirḳa", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 5, Leiden: Brill, 17 f.

18th centuries onwards. The character of the *ṭarīqa* as a corporation and a socio-cultural reality is certainly prominent in the later treatises. But the spiritual dimension of the Sufi Way, its chains of transmission leading to the Prophet, his Companions and their Successors *(tābiʿūn)* clearly predominate in them as well, and the multiple affiliations show a clear tendency to move beyond the exclusive confinement to one community. The influence of Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), who was the first to write a separate treatise on his different *khirqa* affiliations, can be felt throughout this literature. He also became a model for including a *khirqa* which he obtained from the itinerant and long-lived prophet Khaḍir, as he confessed that it was this connection with Khaḍir that had stirred his interest in the *khirqa* transmission in the first place.[7] Uwaysī traditions claiming initiatory contact with the spiritual essence *(rūḥāniyya)* of earlier masters[8], or other *ṭuruq* reputedly based on visions of the Prophet himself, were to play an increasing role in this literature from the 17th century onwards. A fusion of personal affiliations received from Sufi masters with other chains adopted from the growing corpus of literary collections and obtained by scholarly licence (*ijāza*), can also be increasingly observed (starting from the treatise of Ibn Mulaqqin, d. 804/1401). At the end of the Mamluk period, the *khirqa* transmission is blended with a more general vision of the sanctity of the "ways of the chain" *(ṭuruq al-silsila)* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Karakī (d. 900/1494) in his seminal *Nūr al-ḥadaq fī lubs al-khiraq*, as an extension of the Prophetic mission which secures a preserved status for his saints. This already seems to reflect a developing hierarchical and institutional order within the Sufi communities.[9] It may be added that the doctrine of the "preservation" *(ḥifẓ)* of the saints is later taken up by Ṣafi al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1071/1660) who in his *al-Simṭ al-majīd* quotes a text by an Iranian Sufi author of the late 10th/15th century in defence of the disputed *ḥadīth* traditions that were important for Sufism. It also describes the early followers of the Prophet like ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and those who follow in their tracks, as being "preserved" *(maḥfūẓīn)* in their transmissions, with *ḥifẓ* as a status of trustworthiness derived from the Prophetic immunity *(ʿiṣma)* from error and sin.[10] In a line of argument fully developed by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d.

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7 Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*", 60 f.; on Khaḍir as spiritual master for Sufis see also Patrick Franke, *Begegnungen mit Khidr. Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam,* Beirut: Ergon 2000, 233-250.

8 On the semi-legendary Companion Uways al-Qaranī and his alleged spiritual contact with the Prophet, and on the Uwaysiyya as a category of mystics claiming instruction by spiritual relation with a dead or absent person (master or prophet), see Julian Baldick, "Uways al-Ḳaranī", "Uwaysiyya", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 10, 958; Fritz Meier, *Nachgelassene Schriften 1, 2. Die* taṣliya *in sufischen Zusammenhängen*, Bernd Radtke, ed., Leiden: Brill 2005, 347 f.

9 Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*", 68 f.; repeated in later works, also Zabīdī, *Risāla,* f. 6r-v, for this text see n. 21 below; Sanūsi, *Manhal,* 60, see n. 54.

10 Safi al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Nabī al-Anṣārī al-Madanī al-Dajānī, known as al-Qush(sh)āshī, *al-Simṭ al-majīd fī sharʾn al-dhikr wa-talqīnihī wa-salāsil ahl al-tawḥīd,* Haydarabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyya, 1328/1910, 150f. On

911/1505), *khirqa* transmission is modelled after that of *ḥadīth,* and *ḥadīth* is used to defend the *khirqa.* Even the Syrian Ḥanbalīs partake in this collection of Sufi transmissions, with an author like Ibn al-Mibrad (d. 909/1503) including Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), and Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) in his chains.[11]

The Ottoman period in general is marked by an extension of the *khirqa* transmission to that of *dhikr* and other spiritual practices (like *bayʿa* and *khalwa*, for more on which see below), and by an increasing diversity of *ṭuruq* combined within single collections. We see this as early as in ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565) in Egypt but it finds its most comprehensive expression in the writings of 17th- and early 18th-century Meccan and Medinese authors who profited from a novel implantation of Sufi transmissions from India (especially the Shaṭṭāriyya and Naqshbandiyya) and Central Asia into the scholarly community of the Hijaz.[12] The most prominent and influential among these authors, whose writings can be seen as forming a chain of their own and as providing the nucleus of most later works in this field, were Aḥmad al-Shinnāwī (d. 1028/1619), his disciple Ṣafi al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1071/1661, already mentioned above), and Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-ʿUjaymī (d. 1113/1702). Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690), Qushāshī's most influential disciple, also wrote an important work on his scholarly transmissions.[13] The merger of Sufi *salāsil* with the formal patterns of *ḥadīth* scholarship, and the combination of personal Sufi chains with those taken from literary sources obtained by scholarly *ijāza,* came to full fruition in the writings of these authors.

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the *Simṭ* and its author, see Rachida Chih "Rattachement initiatique et pratique de la Voie, selon al-Simt al-majīd d'al-Qushshāshī", in: *Le soufisme à l'époque ottomane, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle/ Sufism in the Ottoman Era, 16th-18th* century, Rachida Chih and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, eds, Cairo: Institute français d'archéologie orientale 2010, 189-208. The statement is quoted from a text written by Hibat Allāh b. ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Kāzarūnī, called Shāh Mīr; on whom Massignon, *Passion,* vol. 2, 202 n. 5 (according to him he died in 1505). He was a grandson of Abū l-Futūḥ al-Ṭāwūsī al-Abarqūhī (d. 871/1466), whose work is discussed in more detail below; see n. 24.

11 Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*", 70 f.

12 Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*", 73; on the spread of the Indian Shaṭṭāriyya and Naqshbandiyya to the Hijaz see also Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015, 249-261.

13 Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*", 73 ff. On Kūrānī, his *al-Amam li-īqāẓ al-himam* and his far-reaching influence as a scholar and Sufi, see Alexander Knysh, "Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690), an Apologist for *waḥdat al-wujūd*", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* Third Series, 5 (1995), 34-45; Basheer Nafi, "Taṣawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture: In Search of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī", *Die Welt des Islams* 42 (2002), 307-355; Atallah S. Copty, "Ibrāhīm Ibn Ḥasan al-Kūrānī's Attitude to the Vocal Remembrance *(dhikr jahrī)*", in: *Zwischen Alltag und Schriftkultur: Horizonte des Individuellen in der arabischen Literatur des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Stefan Reichmuth and Florian Schwarz, eds, Beirut: Ergon 2008, 179-190; İrfan İnce, *Medina im 12./18. Jahrhundert: Politische Beziehungen, Strukturen und Konflikte, mit Einblicken in den Gelehrtendiskurs,* PhD Dissertation, Bochum University 2014, 119-129, 255 ff., 270 f., passim; El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 51 f., 273 ff., 277-290, 306-309, 321 f., 320-332.

ʿUjaymī's *Risāla*, which treats and transmits 40 *ṭuruq* with their chains of transmissions to the author,[14] shows a clear shift of focus towards a general comparative outline of their spiritual concepts and practices. Extant only within Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī (d. 1276/1859), *al-Salsabīl al-maʿīn,* ʿUjaymī"s descriptions include the transmissions of his predecessors. They have provided an important source for research on the history of Sufism,[15] which illustrates the strong historiographical dimension of these later works on Sufi *salāsil.*

Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī and his treatises on his Sufi affiliations

Gril has already referred to Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (1145/1732-1205/1791) and he discusses two of his works on his Sufi affiliations.[16] With their systematic, comprehensive treatment and their alphabetic arrangement of the different *ṭuruq*, they represent for Gril highly important steps in the genre's overall development which he highlights in his overview. He sees Zabīdī as an important witness of the tendency to describe the *ṭarīqa* as a denomination defined by a ramified transmission, analogous to the transmission of Prophetical *ḥadīth.* The encyclopaedic outlook of his approach to the Sufi tradition fits well with Zabīdī's scholarly activities and inclinations.[17] Born into a prominent Sayyid family from Bilgram in northern India, he had left the subcontinent in his youth to study in Zabīd in Yemen and in the Holy Cities of the Hijaz. There he was able to attach himself to some of the most prominent teachers of *ḥadīth* and Arabic philology of his time and to acquire a

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14 No ms. of it has been identified until now, but its text was included by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī (d. 1276/1859) in his *al-Salsabīl al-maʿīn fi l-ṭarāʾiq al-arbaʿīn,* published in *al-Majmūʿa al-mukhtāra min muʾallafāt al-ustādh al-aʿẓam al-imām sayyidī Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī* [Beirut 1968], Manchester 1990. A summary of this *risāla* is also included in Abū Sālim al-ʿAyyāshī"s travelogue *Māʾ al-mawāʾid,* ed. Muḥammad Ḥajjī, Rabat: Maktabat al-Ṭālib 1397/1977, vol 2, 217-220. He had visited the author and obtained an *ijāza* for the transmission of the text, which is part of his account of ʿUjaymi, pp. 213-217. See also Fritz Meier, *taṣliya,* 337 f., 360 ff., 501 f., 505-513. On the *risāla* see also ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris*, ed. Iḥsan ʿAbbās, Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī 1982, vol. 1, 447 ff.

15 It was extensively used by J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1971; see Knut Vikor, *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī and his Brotherhood,* London: Hurst 1995, 231.

16 Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*" 76 f.

17 On Zabīdī's life and works and for the following, see Stefan Reichmuth, "Beziehungen zur Vergangenheit: Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī (gest. 1791) und seine Archäologie islamischer Kultur", *Asiatische Studien* 66 (2002), 439-469; s. a., *The World of Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (1732-1791): Life, Networks, and Writings*, Oxford: Oxbow for Gibb Memorial Trust 2009; s. a., "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî (d. 1205/1791) and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", in: *Le soufisme à l'époque ottomane, XVI^e^-XVIII^e^ siècle/ Sufism in the Ottoman Era, 16th-18th century*, Rachida Chih and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, eds, Cairo: Institute français d'archéologie orientale 2010, 383-406; Monique Bernards, "Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī", in: *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 1350-1850*, Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart, eds, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2009, 419-428.

solid Sufi training from masters of different *ṭuruq*. He then settled in Egypt where he built for himself a splendid career as an encyclopaedic lexicographer, genealogist, and *ḥadīth* scholar, and as an editor and publisher with a wide network of correspondents and friends. This included the entire Ottoman Empire and North Africa and even extended to West Africa, the Sudan, and India. Apart from his excellent and, in his time, unrivalled chains of *ḥadīth* transmission, his fame was based mainly on his "Bridal Crown" (*Tāj al-ʿarūs*), the largest Arabic lexicon ever written, a commentary on Firūzābādī's *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* with copious additions from a wide range of lexicographical, literary, and scientific sources. His Sufi interests were also strong, and he became deeply involved in the activities of the local Sufi *ṭuruq* and their masters in Cairo and the Nile Delta. These interests also shaped his second encyclopaedic project: in the last years before his sudden death as a victim of the plague in 1205/1791, he was able to finish the largest extant commentary on Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's "Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*), titled "The Gift of the God-Fearing Sayyids" (*Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*).

Coming from a family with a strong Qādirī orientation, and attached early on to prominent Naqshbandī teachers, Zabīdī described himself as "Qādirī by training, Naqshbandī by practice" (*al-Qādirī irādatan, al-Naqshbandī sulūkan*).[18] But already during his time in India as well as later in the Yemen, Hijaz, and Egypt, he continued to gather Sufi affiliations, be it through direct transmission or through *ijāzāt* for earlier collections. He also came to offer philological services, editing genealogies, *ijāzāt*, poetry, and *ḥadīth* as well as Sufi transmissions at the request of scholarly and Sufi patrons, friends, or visitors.[19]

It seems that these editing activities provided the starting point for his collection of Sufi *salāsil*. The first was completed as early as 1166/1753, when he compiled the Sufi affiliations of the Ḥaḍramī scholar and Sufi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muṣṭafā al-ʿAydarūs (d. 1192/1778),[20] with whom he was in al-Ṭāʾif at the time. Adding further affiliations of his own, he obtained an *ijāza* for the whole collection from his host, whose poems he had already copied after their first short meeting three years before. Later, in Egypt in 1171/1758, he edited ʿAydarūs' *salāsil*

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18 Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris*, vol. 1, 527; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ijāza* for Muḥammad Saʿīd b. ʿAbdallāh al-Suwaydī (1194/1780), in s. a., *al-Muʿjam al-mukhtaṣṣ*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Yaʿqūbī and Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-ʿAjmī, Beirut: Dār al-bashāʾir al-islāmiyya, 2nd ed. 1431/2010, 810: *al-Naqshbandī sulūkan, al-Qādirī mashraban*. For Zabīdī's career as a Sufi and the place of Sufism in his personal network, see Reichmuth, "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", 384-392.

19 On this, see Reichmuth, *World*, 48-54, 138 (no. 215).

20 On ʿAydarūs see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur (GAL)* I, 586 f., II, 352, *S* II, 478 f.; Zabīdī, *al-Muʿjam al-mukhtaṣṣ*, 367-393 (on Zabīdī's relationship with him, 370-373, 392 f.); Esther Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs und seine Erben. Eine Untersuchung zu Geschichte und Sufismus einer ḥaḍramitischen Sāda-Gruppe vom fünfzehnten bis zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2005, 154-168, 256-268; Reichmuth, *World*, 36 ff., with further reference (n. 198), 48.

again in a separate collection under a different title, at the request of ʿAydarūs, for distribution among his students and visitors who were eager to obtain his many Sufi *ṭuruq*.

A. Risāla fi lubs al-khirqa wa-talqīn al-dhikr *(ca. 1166/1753)*

Zabīdī's first collection survives only in an incomplete version in a manuscript held in Cairo. It is titled "Essay on Donning the (Sufi) Garment and Instruction in the *Dhikr*" (*Risāla fi lubs al-khirqa wa-talqīn al-dhikr)*[21] on its cover, even if the author does not explicitly mention this title in his introduction. A second, non-extant compilation attributed to Zabīdī under the title "The Gates of Happiness and the Transmissions of High Rank" (*Abwāb al-saʿāda wa-salāsil al-siyāda)*[22] might perhaps be identical with this work or represent a more elaborate version of it, as its title appears as part of the initial sentence of the *Risāla*.

The available text focuses on the Sufi transmissions which Zabīdī obtained either by licence (*ijāza*) or discipleship (*irāda*), for the sake of blessing (*tabarruk*), or through the handing over of a text (*munāwala*),[23] from his master and friend ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAydarūs in al-Tāʾif. The author gives a rather comprehensive overview of the literature on the *khirqa* and the transmission of *ṭuruq*. His stated aim is to collect all the mentioned *ṭuruq* in a single volume, relying for this on the transmissions which he had obtained himself from his shaykh, and augmenting them with further material.

A major source which he obtained as a book from ʿAydarūs together with his *ijāza* was the work of Abū l-Futūḥ Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Abī l-Futūḥ al-Abarqūhī al-Ṭāwūsī (d. 871/1466), *Jamʿ al-firaq li-rafʿ al-khiraq*.[24] The author of this work (of which still today there is no attested manuscript) belonged to a scholar family of long standing in Abarqūh in southern Iran. He is mentioned in the introduction for his concept of the "Eight Intermediaries on the Way to the Presence of the Chosen One" *(al-Wasāʾiṭ al-thamāniya ilā ḥaḍrat al-Muṣṭafā*), on which he builds his

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21 Ms. Cairo, Dār al-kutub, *taṣawwuf Ḥalīm* 57; Denis Gril, "Sources manuscrites de l'histoire du soufisme à Dār al-kutub. Un premier bilan", *Annales islamologiques* 28 (1994), 138 f. (ms. no. 56); s. a., "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*", 76 f.; Reichmuth, *World*, 127 (no. 162). I am grateful to Denis Gril for providing me with a copy of this manuscript.

22 Reichmuth, *World* 98 (no. 1). The *Risāla* itself opens as follows: *al-ḥamdu li-llāhi fātiḥ* ***abwāb al-saʿāda*** *li-man iltajā ilayhi / wa-māniḥ* ***asbāb al-siyāda*** *li-l-sālik subul al-tawakkul ilayhi /.../*.

23 On this important distinction, already made by Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) and reiterated in later treatises, see Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭariqa*" 58 f.

24 On this author, his family, and his work, see ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn. Tarājim muṣannifī l-kutub al-ʿarabiyya,* vol. 1, 295 f.; Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris,* vol. 2, 914 f.; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ fī aʿyān al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* [Cairo 1313/1896], Beirut: Dār al-Jil 1412/1992, vol. 1, 360; ʿAyyāshī, *Māʾ al-mawāʾid,* vol. 1, 207 f.; Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-Qāmūs,* Kuwait: Maṭbaʿat Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt 1965-2002, vol. 16, 216 f.; Louis Massignon, *Passion*, vol. 2, 200 ff.; Reichmuth, *World,* 20.

treatise on Sufi groups (*firaq)* and their garments. These are presented as persons in direct or spiritual contact with the Prophet, through whom all Sufi ways link up. The list given by Abū Sālim al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 1090/1676), who also received the eight garments related to these "Intermediaries" during his stay in Medina,[25] begins with the itinerant prophets Khaḍir and Ilyās (Elias), followed by the caliphs Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿAlī, and the Companions ʿAbdallāh b. al-ʿAbbās, and Abū Dardāʾ. The eighth intermediary was a medieval Sufi from Damascus, Abū l-Bayān Nabaʾ b. Maḥfūẓ al-Qurashī al-Ḥawrānī (d. 551/1156),[26] who had reputedly received his *khirqa* directly from the Prophet in an encounter with him whilst he was awake (for such reputed contacts see further below). The list thus combines caliphs and companions with sources of spiritual contact that transcend the course of time. It even includes a famous medieval Sufi whose direct spiritual affiliation with the Prophet had been accepted for further transmission even by the Algerian ʿĪsā al-Thaʿālibī (d. 1669), a Sufi scholar and high-ranking specialist of the rational sciences. The reference to Khaḍir would also remain crucial for Zabīdī's later collections, where the spiritual links were further augmentented by the Uwaysiyya (already mentioned above) and by the addition of another Companion, Abū Miqdām Shurayḥ b. Hānī,[27] who served as Prophetic link for the Shurayḥiyya, another Sufi *ṭarīqa.* The combination of 'normal' transmissions with spiritual links and their blessing seems to have been a central and widely recognized characteristic for the whole genre of collections of Sufi chains in the Ottoman period. Ṭāwūsī's book and his *salāsil* had already been used by Qushāshī in his *al-Simṭ al-majīd*[28]. The range of *ṭuruq* which Zabīdī transmitted from him will be discussed further in the context of his third book.

The first part of the *Risāla* lays out the basis of *khirqa* and *dhikr* in the Prophetic tradition and the justification of their practice. Zabīdī also elaborates on the different chains of transmission which he obtained from ʿAydarūs for both the Sufi garments and for the loud and the silent *dhikr.* They all lead back along different channels to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and from him to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who is said to have received the Prophet's recommendation to keep to the recitation of *lā ilāha illā llāh* as the easiest, closest, and most meritorious way to God. The introduction begins with a quotation attributed to a Sufi of the 10th/16th century (Abū l-Makārim Ibrāhīm b. Wafāʾ, d. 968/1560, a leader of the Egyptian

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25 ʿAyyāshī, *Māʾ al-mawāʾid,* vol. 1, 207 f.; the donor was ʿĪsā al-Thaʿālibī (d. 1669), a highly influential scholar in Medina, on whom see Khalid El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 155 ff., 162, 164 f. He had obtained them from Qushāshī.

26 On Bayānī, eponym of the *ṭarīqa Bayāniyya* mentioned later by Zabīdī, see Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn,* vol. 13, 75; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ a. o., Beirut: Muʾassasat al-risāla, vol. 20, 1405/1985, 326 f.

27 On whom see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 4, 1402/1982, 107. It may be mentioned that, like Uways al-Qaranī, he is known as a strong supporter of the caliph ʿAlī, and even served him as a military commander.

28 E. g. Qushāshī, *al-Simṭ al-majīd,* 75, 109, 145 ff.

Wafāʾiyya)[29] about the manifold ways to God, which are comparable in their plurality to the countless breaths of created beings, and unified by their common aim, which is One.[30] At the end, this individualizing message is complemented by a communal one. Zabīdī stresses the need of the Sufi's soul *(nafs)* to keep to the Sufi community like a ring *(ḥalaqa)* in a chain connecting him with his shaykh, with the other saints and the Prophet, and leading him to the Presence of God. Whenever he moves the ring of his soul *(ḥalaqat nafsihi)*, all other links of the chain will respond. Without becoming part of their chain, he will not belong to them, and nobody will respond to his movement.[31] The individual's search and communal belonging thus have to be finely balanced.

But Zabīdī's stated aim leads beyond these attachments, as he declares his intention from the start to collect the well-known *ṭuruq* and their documented branches in a comprehensive manner that excludes only those lines which were rare or had not found adherents and thus remained obscure.[32] Even if not realized in this early attempt, the lexicographical approach was indeed a novel element which was introduced by Zabīdī into this specific genre of religious literature. It might well be that this early work was his first attempt to show his hand as a lexicographer, in a field of knowledge which, as it seems, had not yet been brought into alphabetic order.

B. Itḥāf al-aṣfiyāʾ bi-rafʿ salāsil al-awliyāʾ *(1175/1761)*

After this early version, which in its extant form only contains a lengthy introduction and stops after the enumeration of just four *ṭuruq*, a second and fairly comprehensive collection, this time without any longer introductory part, was written by Zabīdī in Egypt a few years later in 1175/1761. It is titled "The Gift to the Close Friends, tracing the Chains of the Saints (to the Prophet)" (*Itḥāf al-aṣfiyāʾ bi-rafʿ salāsil al-awliyāʾ*). Mentioned in several of his *ijāzāt*, it is attested in a manuscript in Ankara, in a copy held in the library of the *İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi* (İSAM) in Istanbul, and in a private collection.[33] *Itḥāf al-aṣfiyāʾ* consists of a lexicon of 128

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29 On whose founders and their Sufi legacy see Richard McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafāʾ Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn ʿArabī*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2004.

30 Zabīdī, *Risāla*, 3v-4r; it had already been used and commented upon by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, from whom it was later quoted by Sanūsī as an introduction to his *Salsabīl*, 6; for other instances of this topos, Fritz Meier, *Abū Saʿīd Abū l-Ḫair (357-440/967-1049). Wirklichkeit und Legende*, Leiden: Brill 1976, 1 f.

31 Zabīdī, *Risāla*, f. 14v-14r.

32 Zabīdī, *Risāla*, f. 3r: *wa-risālatunā hādhihi jāmiʿa in shāʾa llāhu taʿālā li-l-ṭuruq al-madhkūra / wa-l-shuʿab al-mastūra / ʿalā wajhin lam yashudhdha minhā illā mā qalla wa-nadar / aw ṭarīq mā tuluqqiya fa-mā shtahar.*

33 On the attested manuscripts, see Reichmuth, *World*, 110 (no. 64). I am grateful to İrfan İnce for providing me with a scanned copy of the version available at İSAM, Istanbul.

ṭuruq with their chains of transmission, something which Zabīdī had already begun but not finished in his *Risāla*. He himself proudly calls his work "a treatise small in size, but great in significance" *(risāla ṣaghīrat al-ḥajm kabīrat al-maʿnā)*. By this he seems to have implied that he was in fact without predecessor in his special lexicographical endeavour, which he succeeded in carrying out here for the first time. The *ṭuruq* are commented upon with short notes on their eponym, their relation to other *ṭuruq*, and with the *sanad*s that connect the author with each of them, by direct transmission or by *ijāza* from a written source. Explicit links to the Companions and to the Prophet are only traced occasionally, whereas for the other chains this claim is based on their connections with these major lines. The book was finished during a period when Zabīdī was still developing his relations with the major Egyptian *ṭuruq*, and it may well have played a role in this process.

The material collected in *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'* went to a large extent into the third lexicon, with some additions and rearrangements, but also with the omission of several *ṭuruq* which still remains to be explained (on a possible restriction caused by the symbolic value of the number 128, see below). In the case of the Baktāshiyya[34], the author states that he did not meet anybody from whom he could obtain a *sanad* for it. Ibn ʿArabī and his disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī are mentioned each with their own *ṭarīqa* (Ḥātimiyya, Ṣadriyya),[35] both of which did not make it into the third collection. Given Zabīdī's strong attachment to Ibn ʿArabī, this is difficult to explain, even if the *shaykh al-akbar* comes up in other transmissions.[36] The same occurs with the Salīmiyya, the Chishtiyya branch related to Salīm al-Chishtī (d. 1572), shaykh of the Mughal ruler Akbar who erected a mausoleum for him in the Friday Mosque of Fatḥpūr Sikrī.[37] The *ṭarīqa* of the famous Yemeni Sufi and poet ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (mentioned as Bā Ḥaddād, d. 1132/1719-20),[38] was equally dropped, as was the Iranian Nūrbakhshiyya, which the author had traced to a famous disciple of the founder,[39] without, however, mentioning any

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34 Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'*, 13; notably presented as a branch of the Ṣafawiyya, which is also given a separate entry.

35 Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'*, 21, 56.

36 Â. Y. Koçak, *Al-Murtadâ al-Zabîdî ve 'Iqd al-Cavhar al-amîn'i*, PhD Dissertation, İstanbul 1986, 31 (Uwaysiyya), 82 (Sabtiyya). He is also known to have transmitted the *ṭarīqa* of Ibn ʿArabī to the father of the Algerian emir ʿAbd al-Qādir; see Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore: Ibn ʿArabī, the Book, and the Law.* Albany: State University of New York Press 1989, 16. I am grateful to Arthur Buehler and İrfan İnce for providing copies of Koçak's thesis.

37 Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'*, 40. He mentions that he obtained the *ṭarīqa* from Shaykh Amānullāh al-Fatḥpūrī, the gate-keeper of the *maqām*.

38 Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'*, 76. On him see Moṣṭafā al-Badawī, *Sufi Sage of Arabia: Imam ʿAbdallah ibn al-Ḥaddād*, Louisville: Fons Vitae 2005.

39 Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'*, 95: "Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī al-Adhamī al-Jīlānī al-Nūrbakhshī, author of *Mafātiḥ al-iʿjāz fi sharḥ Gulshān-i rāz*", to be identified with Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Lāhījī (d. 921/1515), with his well-known commentary on the famous *Gulshān-i rāz* of Maḥmūd Shābistārī (14th cent.); see Hamid Algar, "Nūrbakhshiyya", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 8, Leiden: Brill, 135; s. a. "Golšān-e Rāz", in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 11, New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation 2001, 109 ff.

chain of affiliation. In this case his reticence might well have to do with the obvious Twelver Shīʿī background of this *ṭarīqa*.

C. ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn fi l-dhikr wa-ṭuruq al-ilbās wa-l-talqīn *(1181/1768)*

The last and most comprehensive collection was finally completed in 1181/1768, by which time Zabīdī had achieved full recognition as a lexicographer, genealogist, *muḥaddith,* and Sufi in Egypt; he was about to finish the first quarter *(rubʿ)* of his lexicon in the same year. The new work is titled "The Necklace of Precious Jewels: About the *Dhikr* and the Ways of Vesting (with the Garment) and Instruction" *(ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn fi l-dhikr wa-ṭuruq al-ilbās wa-l-talqīn).*[40] It combines again a general introduction into Sufi practice with a comprehensive transmission of a large number of different *ṭuruq*.

Zabīdī notes at the end[41] that he completed the draft of this text at a local Sufi centre in Kafr Khamīs in the Nile Delta, during Ramaḍān 1181/1768, at the tomb of Sīdī Ramaḍān al-Muwajjah, who was also the founder of the Zanfaliyya, a local branch of the *ṭarīqa* of Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 675/1276). His hosts, the leaders of this *ṭarīqa,* were Muwajjah's descendants. The colophon contains an *ijāza* for them, and the Ramaḍān session at the tomb suggests a ceremonial occasion for the meeting, quite an honour for the family of an otherwise little known local saint, whose name thus became connected with this comprehensive piece of Sufi literature.

The book includes a general introduction into the basic elements of Sufism and a short description of 128 *ṭuruq* along with some notes on their eponyms and their different chains of transmissions as they had been passed down to the author. Sometimes further remarks on their character and their spiritual promises have been added. As mentioned above, much of the material was taken from the *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'*. Some of its entries were omitted, others renamed, and new ones were

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40 Edited by Â. Y. Koçak, *Al-Murtadâ al-Zabîdî*. Mss: a) Medina: ʿĀrif Ḥikmat Nr. 260/55, dated 19 Dhū l-Ḥijja 1204/30 August 1790; b) Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Ktph., Muhammed Tancî Kısmı, *Mecmua,* ff. 1b-58a, dat. 4 Muḥarram 1205/14 September 1790; c) Kairo, *taṣawwuf Taymūr* 332, (film no. 55045), dated Tuesday, 30 Rabīʿ al-awwal 1205/Tuesday, 7.12.1790, Gril, "Sources manuscrites", 139, no. 57. Ms. also mentioned by Barbara von Schlegell, "Saʿdiyya", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 8, Leiden: Brill, 728; d) Kairo, *Taṣawwuf* 4072 (film no. 54802), dated 1254/1838; e) Ms. in the private collection of E. Geoffroy, dated 1339/1921; mentioned in his article "Ṭarīḳa I.", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 10, Leiden: Brill, 245. Photocopies of three mss in İSAM, İstanbul (297.7 ZEB.I), GNL.YZM.FTV 004622K, 008062K, 011496K. See also Reichmuth, *World*, 107 (no. 46); Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*", 77; Reichmuth, "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", 392-397.

41 Koçak, *Al-Murtadâ al-Zabîdî*, 148 ff.

added.[42] The total number of *ṭuruq* remained constant despite all the changes (128). This seems to indicate an intended numerological message which the author wanted to preserve and which has yet to be clarified. It is worth mentioning, however, that the number can be read as a combination of the numerical values of the name *Muḥammad* (92) and the divine name *ilāh* "god" (36). Thus it might perhaps mark the whole collection as linked to the Prophet, and, through him, to God Himself.

Based on personal contacts with 42 different masters for personal transmission or the awarding of licences for written sources, the material of the *ʿIqd al-jawhar* amounts to a comprehensive historical network of the Sufi tradition, tied into a single package for further use. Like its predecessor, it includes *ṭuruq* of most distant regional origins and covers the Yemen, Hijaz, Egypt, Syria, and North Africa as well as Central Asian, Iranian and Indian Sufi traditions. It might be regarded as the ultimate product of Zabīdī's multiple contacts, and of his philological works for his own Sufi masters, by which he finally arrived at a large collection for himself – a collection which, by the number of its *ṭuruq*, would seem to have few rivals in the history of Sufi literature.

Introduction of the ʿIqd al-jawhar

ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn opens with a short treatise on the significance of *dhikr* and its various forms, the oath of allegiance *(bayʿa)* to the shaykh, the vesting *(ilbās)* with the Sufi garment, and the practice of seclusion *(khalwa)*.[43] It conveys some general standard forms of Sufi practice which nevertheless suggest a performative dimension with highly intense emotional involvement. *Dhikr* itself is compared with a sultan who comes with his entourage and his trumpets to take possession of every limb of the body. It is also described as a fire that neither spares nor leaves those of whom it takes possession. As *dhikr* pervades all the essences from which the human being was created, it will make one hear the sounds of water, wind, and fire, the grinding of millstones, the sound of galloping horses, or of leaves moved by the wind. They all come to join in the praise of God. The adept who desires to be given a *dhikr* by his shaykh should spend three days and nights in prayer. On the edge of sleep he should be in a state whereby he is ready to have the Prophet in his presence, as if he sees him sitting at his bedside. Then, if he is sincerely prepared, he will have precious experiences and obtain divine blessings. For the connection with the guide (*murshid)*, two ways are distinguished. The first is a formal attachment *(taʿalluq ṣūrī)* which is based on perfect obedience but does not require the continuous presence of the disciple *(murīd);* the second involves attachment in

[42] See the list of all transmitted *ṭuruq* in the Appendix below, where occurrence in each of the three works is indicated by the capital letters A, B, and C.

[43] Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 2-24.

the full sense *(taʿalluq maʿnawī)* which goes along with companionship *(ṣuḥba)* and obedient service *(khidma),* whereby the shaykh assumes the role of the physician and fellow traveller of his disciple. Complete obedience is required, and once selected, attachment to the first *murshid* can no longer be repudiated. These and other pieces of advice suggest a general pattern of Sufi practice, more or less independent of any fixed *ṭarīqa* custom. It is only for the ritual of the oath of allegiance *(bayʿa)* that three versions, two from the Indian Shaṭṭāriyya and the Hijazi usage, are distinguished.[44]

Sources of the ʿIqd al-jawhar

The entire introduction was compiled almost completely from one of the major sources of the *ʿIqd al-jawhar*: the *al-Simṭ al-majīd* of Ṣafi al-Dīn al-Qushāshī (d. 1072/1661).[45] His descriptions were on their part taken to a large extent from the famous Egyptian Shādhilī author Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī's (d. 709/1309) and his *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ,*[46] and from Muḥammad Ghawth (d. 970/1562), the famous Indian Shaṭṭārī of the 16th century whose two books, *al-Jawāhir al-khams* and *al-Darajāt,* had been introduced to the Hijaz by an Indian Sufi, Ṣibghat Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Barwajī (or Barūchī, d. 1015/1606).[47] Qushāshī's own Sufi master, Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Shinnāwī (d. 1028/1619), was of Egyptian origin, and his father had been a student of Shaʿrānī. But Shinnāwī later became a disciple of Ṣibghat Allāh in the Hijaz. Through him and Qushāshī, important Sufi affiliations of India joined with those of Egypt and North Africa in the Holy Cities. Shinnāwī himself was called "the gatherer of *ṭuruq*" *(jāmiʿ al-ṭuruq)* by Qushāshī.[48]

As already mentioned above, Zabīdī obtained affiliations directly from 42 *shuyūkh*, whether by personal transmission or by *ijāza*. Some of these became his authorities for multiple transmissions, in some cases up to ten *ṭuruq*. His teachers ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAydarūs (d. 1192/1778), ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Mizjājī (d.1181/1768), and ʿUmar b. ʿAqīl (d. 1174/1760) were his most significant partners also for his Sufi affiliations, followed by an Indian sayyid resident in the Hijaz, Nūr al-Ḥaqq b. ʿAbdallāh al-Mutawakkilī al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1166/1753), the Egyptian Burhānī shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Marzūqī al-ʿAfifi (d. 1172/1758), and many others.

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44 Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 16-19.

45 For Qushāshī, see n. 10 above. For the list of sources presented by Zabīdī himself in the *ʿIqd al-jawhar*, see Reichmuth, "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", 394.

46 *GAL* II, 117 f., *S* II, 145 ff.

47 On this Indian Sufi and his significance for the transmission of the Shaṭṭāriyya and Naqshbandiyya in the Hijaz, including his Arabic translations of the *Jawāhir al-khams*, see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History,* 249 ff., 257, 348; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn*, vol. 5, 16 f.

48 Qushāshī, *Simṭ,* 65.

Abū al-Futūḥ al-Ṭāwūsī's *Jamᶜ al-firaq,* which has already been mentioned in connection with the *Risāla,* also emerges as a key work for the *ᶜIqd al-jawhar.* It is quoted by Qushāshī[49] and even more so by Zabīdī, for the most part in connection with his transmission from ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-ᶜAydarūs. Zabīdī traces 30 *ṭuruq* from his collection to Ṭāwūsī. As already indicated by Massignon, the first to deal with Ṭāwūsī's transmissions[50], these *ṭuruq* link up with the aforementioned "intermediaries" (*wasā'iṭ*), through whom access to the Prophet had been channeled, including Khaḍir, Ilyās, and Uways al-Qaranī (see below), and also make use of other chains with transmitters of alleged longevity *(muᶜammarūn)*[51] who were able to provide "shortcuts" for the way back to the Prophet.[52] The larger part, however, provides links to some of the early Sufi *ṭuruq* which had already vanished or were surviving locally in his own region (Shīrāz, Kāzarūn, Bayżā, Abarqūh). Other Iranian, Khurāsānian, and Transoxanian lines can also be found among them. Ṭawūsī's effort to collect and revive those traditions and to secure them for posterity as links to the Prophet are clearly recognizable from his list; the results went into many of the later collections.

The Medinese line of Shinnāwī (at least 13 *ṭuruq),* Qushāshī (17 *ṭuruq)* and his disciple Ḥasan al-ᶜUjaymī (12 *ṭuruq*) also plays a central role of its own in the chains of transmission in the *ᶜIqd al-jawhar.* It may be noted that these later masters and transmitters of the 17th century were strong adherents and defenders of Ibn ᶜArabī and contributed considerably to the rooting of his doctrines in Mecca and Medina.[53] This intellectual trend went along with the rise of *ḥadīth* studies for which the Ḥaramayn were also gaining special notoriety at this time, and which were also pursued with vigour by these Sufi scholars. Demonstrating the multiplicity of Sufi Ways leading to the Prophetic Reality and to the One God, tied in perfectly, of course, not only with the model of *ḥadīth* but also with their general Akbarian tendencies. Zabīdī, himself strongly committed to the doctrine of Ibn ᶜArabī, had been in close contact with the descendants and disciples of this circle in Medina. Apart from his Sufi commitments and his scholarly activities as a *ḥadīth* specialist and lexicographer, his strong genealogical interests also fed into his collections of Sufi *ṭuruq,* and he is even mentioned by Sanūsī for

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49 E. g. Qushāshī, *al-Simṭ al-majīd,* 75; see also n. 28 above.

50 Massignon, *Passion,* vol. 2, 201 f. He lists 26 *ṭuruq* for the *ᶜIqd al-jawhar*; to which four can be added. All their names have been underlined in the list of Zabīdī's *ṭuruq* at the end of this article.

51 Zabīdī, *ᶜIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 51, 57, 67, 126, 134.

52 Among his chains of this *ṭarīqa muᶜammariyya,* Zabīdī mentions a meeting with a Yemeni Sufi *muᶜammar,* Sayyid Mushayyakh b. Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq Bā ᶜAbbūd, who was reputed to have received the handshake *(muṣāfaḥa)* from the Prophet himself! Cf. Zabīdī, *ᶜIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 135.

53 Cf. on this El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History,* ch. 8, 235-271. Note that the mentioned Ḥātimiyya, which was traced to Ibn ᶜArabī, was also among the *ṭuruq* transmitted by ᶜUjaymī in his *Risāla,* cf. ᶜAyyāshī, *Mā' al-mawā'id,* vol. 2, 219; Sanūsī, *Salsabīl,* 6, 45 ff.

having recommended a graphic presentation of Sufi *salāsil* following the lines of genealogical descent.[54]

The tradition of collective transmissions of Sufi *ṭuruq* which is outlined here continued into the 19th century, especially with the two aforementioned books written by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī (d. 1276/1859), *al-Salsabīl al-maʿīn* and *al-Manhal al-rawī*. The significance of this tradition for the history – and historiography – of Sufism has yet to be fully assessed.[55]

The merger of regional Sufi traditions

The *ṭuruq* which Zabīdī managed to collect in this way cover a wide range of regional Sufi traditions.[56] Mecca and Medina clearly serve as a major focal point, but input comes mainly from the Yemen, Egypt, the Maghreb (via Egypt), and India. The old traditions of Iranian and Central Asian Sufism appear in transmissions channelled through India and the Yemen to the Hijaz, in some cases also to Syria. Even the Jahriyya/Yasawiyya of Central Asia reached Zabīdī through his Yemeni masters.[57] The introduction of Indian Sufi *ṭuruq*, like the Shaṭṭāriyya and the different lines of the Naqshbandiyya, into the Hijaz and the Middle East, which had already been underway since the 11th/17th century, also finds its reflection in the *ʿIqd al-jawhar*.

On the other hand, the Ottoman capital and heartland are scarcely represented among the Sufi chains figuring in the *ʿIqd al-jawhar* and the other collections. The chains for reputed Ottoman *ṭuruq* like the Khalwatiyya and the Mawlawiyya go back to either Egyptian, Syrian, or Iranian sources, and not to the Anatolian masters. Famous Ottoman *ṭuruq* like the Zayniyya, Bayramiyya, Jarrāḥiyya are missing. This also pertains to the Ṣafawiyya *ṭarīqa* of Ardabil, which is mentioned by Zabīdī in both *Itḥāf al-aṣfiyā'* and the *ʿIqd al-jawhar*[58] with different chains whose 'common link' is the Khurāsānī Sufi Zayn al-Dīn al-Khwāfī (d. 838/1435), known for his visit to Egypt and his contact with its scholars. An exception to these supra-regional

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54 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī (d. 1276/1859), *al-Manhal al-rawī al-rā'iq fī asānīd al-ʿulūm wa-uṣūl al-ṭarā'iq,* published in *al-Majmūʿa al-mukhtāra min mu'allafāt al-ustādh al-aʿẓam al-imām sayyidī Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī,* Manchester 1990, 88. For Zabīdī's genealogical activities and writings, see Reichmuth, *World,* index, 378 ("Genealogy").

55 On further works of the 13th/19th and early 20th century, see Gril, "De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*," 78 f.

56 On the following see Reichmuth's earlier article, "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", 395 f., 399.

57 Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 61 f.

58 Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-aṣfiyā'*, 57; s. a., *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 100 f.; for Zayn al-Dīn al-Khwāfī *GAL* II, 206, *S* II, 285. For the Shaykh Ṣafī, his master Ibrāhīm Zāhid, and the early history of the Ṣafawiyya in the 13th-14th century, see Monika Gronke, *Derwische im Vorhof der Macht. Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Nordwestirans im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert,* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 1993, esp. 241-357.

connections is the aforementioned case of the Baktāshiyya, which is presented in the *Itḥāf* as a branch of the Ṣafawiyya. Its eponym (called "Ibrāhīm al-Khurāsānī", said to have died in the 9th/15th century) is linked to this *ṭarīqa* through two other Sufi saints of Anatolia.[59] The legend of his creation of the Janissary corps for the Ottoman sultan is also mentioned. But this was not taken up in the *ʿIqd al-jawhar.*

Yemeni authorities provided links to the Iranian lines of the Kāzarūniyya and even to al-Ḥallāj and his descendants (mainly via Abū l-Futūḥ al-Ṭāwūsī).[60] For the Naqshbandiyya, both Mujaddidī and other chains were already available to Zabīdī in his early youth in India. He obtained three different strands of them from the famous Dehli scholar Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1176/1762), whom he had visited before he left India for the Yemen.[61]

Spiritual links to Masters and Prophets: Khaḍiriyya, Uwaysiyya, Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya

A remarkable number of *ṭuruq* lead back to personalities who had reputedly been in immediate spiritual contact with the Prophets Khaḍir or Ilyās (Elias),[62] with other saints of the past, or even with the Prophet Muḥammad himself. This contact is often described as mediated by the "spiritual essence" *(rūḥāniyya)* of those figures.

Seven *ṭuruq* alone are traced back by Zabīdī to the prophet Khaḍir;[63] three of them already in the *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'* (Khaḍiriyya, Jahriyya/Yasawiyya, Ḥammuwiyya[64]), the others added in the *ʿIqd al-jawhar* (Bayḍāwiyya,[65] Karduwiyya, Kir-

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59 Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-asfiyā',* 13. These are Bayram Walī al-Anqarawī (d. 833/1430), eponym of the Bayramiyya, and his master Ḥamīd al-Dīn Aqsarāyī, known as Somuncu Baba (d. 815/1412, buried in Darende), an Anatolian Sufi scholar affiliated with the Ṣafawiyya; on both see Fuat Bayramoğlu/Nihat Azamat, "Bayramiyye", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA),* vol. 5, 269-273; Nihat Azamat, "Hacı Bayram Veli", *DİA* vol. 14, 442-447; Haşim Şahin, "Somuncu Baba", *DİA*, vol. 37, 377 f.

60 On this, see Reichmuth, "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", 399.

61 Reichmuth, *World,* 12 f. For Shāh Walī Allāh's own *salāsil* see his *Intibāh fī salāsil-i awliyā Allāh,* Persian text published with the Urdu translation as *Mutarjam-i Intibāh fī salāsil-i awliyā Allāh* by Miyān ʿAzīz Aḥmad and Ṣūfī Muḥammad Fārūq Samūn, repr. Karachi: Ghawthiyya Bayt al-Kitāb, n.d. [ʿAbbāsī Kutubkhāna, 1342/1923].

62 Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 35 f. (Ilyāsiyya), 54 f. (Bayḍāwiyya), 62 f. (Jahriyya/Yasawiyya), 66 (Ḥammuwiyya), 68 ff. (Khaḍiriyya), 126 (Karduwiyya), 127 (Kirmāniyya), 146 (Hizmīriyya), 147 f. (Yaʿqūbiyya). Four of them (Ilyāsiyya, Bayḍāwiyya, Ḥammuwiyya and Karduwiyya) were transmitted via Abū l-Futūḥ al-Ṭāwūsī.

63 On him see n. 7 above.

64 On Ibn Ḥammūya (fl. 7th/13th cent.), also known as Ibn Ḥamawayh or Ibn Ḥamūya, see Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam,* Albany: State University of New York Press 1999, 72, 310, n. 133; Franke, *Begegnungen mit Khidr,* 247, n. 266.

65 For Bayḍāwī's reputed connection with Khaḍir, see Massignon, *Passion,* vol. 2, 200 (already with reference to Zabīdī's *ʿIqd al-jawhar);* Franke, *Begegnungen mit Khidr,* 249.

māniyya, Hizmīriyya), where links to the prophet Ilyās are also mentioned. A long quotation taken from Shaʿrānī stresses Khaḍir's living presence until the day of resurrection, and his role as an instructor for the pious who only appears to those who firmly keep to the Sunna. Zabīdī, who has a lengthy lemma on this figure in his *Tāj al-ʿarūs*,[66] where he strongly supports his living existence, mentions personal links to chains ending with people who reputedly met Khaḍir. He had obtained these from his teachers Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī (d. 1192/1778) and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAydarūs, whose transmissions both lead to Maghribī Sufis who are yet to be fully identified.[67] It can be noted that these chains do not coincide with those given by Sanūsī in his *Manhal*.[68] They will by no means have been the only ones. The *silsila* for the corresponding figure of Ilyās/Elias belongs again to the transmissions which were adopted from Abū l-Futūḥ al-Ṭāwūsī, who, as indicated above, presented this prophet as one of the eight intermediaries with direct contact to the Prophet Muḥammad.

Much space is also given to the Uwaysiyya,[69] already mentioned above, and to its *dhikr* practice which is based on the personal initiative of the adept and is reputed to lead, without recourse to other helping figures, to an encounter with the intended *rūḥāniyya*, be it of prophets or *shuyūkh*. Zabīdī's links were provided by two of his teachers, among them his close friend, the well-known Sufi shaykh from al-Ṭāʾif, ʿAbdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Mīrghanī (d. 1207/1792), with a *silsila* leading to Qushāshī and from him directly to the *rūḥāniyya* of Ibn ʿArabī, who was in his turn connected with the Prophet Muḥammad through the *rūḥāniyya* of ʿĪsā (Jesus). Other chains lead from Qushāshī to Shaʿrānī and his masters, who apparently played a central role in this complex of transmissions with their reputed spiritual contact to the Prophet himself. Some other longer chains for the *khirqa Uwaysiyya*

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66 Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, vol. 11, 183 ff. *(al-Khaḍir)*.

67 Al-Damanhūrī received it from his Maghribī teacher Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hashtūkī (d. 1715; on him see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 135, n. 10), with a chain leading to Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Marrākushī. In the *Itḥāf al-asfiyāʾ*, 28, the same chain starts with Aḥmad al-Mallawī (d. 1181/1767; on him see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 133 ff.), another teacher of Zabīdī, also of Maghribī origin. The one obtained from ʿAydarūs ends with Sīdī Muḥammad al-ʿAyyāshī. He is perhaps the father of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 1091/1680), whose name is given in the *Nashr al-mathānī* as *Sīdī Muḥammad;* cf. Muḥammad Ḥajjī, *Mawsūʿat aʿlām al-Maghrib*, Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī 1417/1996, vol. 4, 1652 f.

68 Cf. Sanūsī, *Manhal*, 59-62, for his *salāsil* of the Khaḍiriyya. He relies first on the transmission of his teacher Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d. 1253/1837) whose chain leads via his teacher (al-Tāzī) to the famous Sufi ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Dabbāgh (d. 1132/1720); see Rex S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*, London: Hurst 1990, 40-44. Another chain leads via ʿUjaymī, Qushāshī to Ibn ʿArabī, a third one to a Sufi named Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAbdallāh al-Fulānī, presumably of West African origin.

69 Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 30-35; s. a., *Itḥāf al-asfiyāʾ*, 8 f.; see above n. 6, 32. The definition of this *ṭarīqa* is quoted from ʿUjaymī's *Risāla*, as was also done later by Sanūsī, *Salsabīl*, 31 ff.; see below.

were traced through the famous Ibn Khafif al-Shīrāzī (d. 371/982)[70] to Uways himself. Abū l-Futūḥ al-Ṭāwūsī also provided an Iranian *silsila* of his own. The traditions clearly concentrate on the line connecting Qushāshī and Shaʿrānī, with earlier links to Iranian transmissions. Ibn ʿArabī, too, emerges as a partner of *rūḥāniyya* contacts for the Sufis.

Another spiritual way described at length is the much-disputed *Ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya*.[71] Its importance within the whole collection is borne out by the fact that it includes a definition of its goals and practice, something which is otherwise only found for the Uwaysiyya (both *ṭuruq* are, of course, closely related; see below). In both cases the text goes back to ʿUjaymī's *Risāla*. But although not stated in this case, the quotation for the *Ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya* was apparently taken from ʿAyyāshī's text in his *Riḥla*, from where it was also quoted later by Sanūsī in his *Salsabīl*.[72] Zabīdī presents it with some omissions and some slight but not insignificant alterations:[73]

> The goal of its special way is the association with him (may God bless him and grant him peace!) – everything indeed[74] returns to him and is taken from him! – whereby its follower, after rectifying his beginning and his (Sufi) conduct on a righteous way, occupies himself with his benediction, until the love of him takes possession of his heart, and his (i.e. the Prophet's) (inner) secret *(sirruhu)* blends with his intellect *(lubb);* so that he trembles when he hears him being mentioned. The vision of him lays hold of his

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70 On him see Florian Sobieroj, *Ibn Ḫafif aš-Širāzī und seine Schrift zur Novizenerziehung (Kitāb al-Iqtiṣād). Biographische Studien, Edition und Übersetzung,* Beirut: Ergon 1998.

71 Although far from settled, the debate on the *Ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya* has been extensive and cannot be covered here. The reader is referred in particular to Vikør, *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge*; Bernd Radtke, "Ibrīziana: Themes and Sources of a Seminal Sufi Work", *Sudanic Africa. A Journal of Historical Sources,* 7 (1996), 113-158; Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*, Austin: University of Texas Press 1998; Bernd Radtke, John O'Kane, Knut S. Vikør, R. S. O'Fahey, *The Exoteric Aḥmad Ibn Idrīs: A Sufi's Critique of the Madhāhib & the Wahhābis*, Leiden: Brill 2000, esp. 15-19; Mark Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons: The Making and Remaking of the Rashīdī Aḥmadī Sufi Order, 1799-2000*, Leiden: Brill 2005, 9-82; and, finally, Fritz Meier, *taṣliya,* which is the most comprehensive treatment to date and includes discussions and translations of many crucial source texts.

72 ʿAyyāshī, *Mā' al-mawā'id,* vol. 2, 217; Sanūsī, *Salsabīl,* 7. For a German translation of this passage, see Meier, *taṣliya,* 337, 501 f. Whether this text abridges the other one given in Sanūsī, *Manhal,* 49 f., translated by Radtke, "Ibrīziana", 125, or also goes back to ʿUjaymī himself, cannot be decided as long as no copy of his *Risāla* is extant.

73 Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 129 f. In addition to this, the manuscript Cairo: *taṣawwuf Taymūr* 322, which includes some variants which are indicated in both the translation and transliteration, was also used: *wajhu ikhtiṣāṣihā bi-l-intisāb* (var. *insāb [sic]) ilayhi ṣ-l-ʿ-m / in kullun* (var. *inna l-kull) rājiʿ ilayhi wa-mustamadd minhu / wa-dhālika anna ṣāḥibahā baʿda tasḥiḥi bidāyatihi wa-sulūkihi ʿalā manhaj al-istiqāma yashtaghil bi-l-ṣalāt wa-l-salām ʿalayhi ṣ-l-ʿ-m ilā an tastawliya maḥabbatuhu ʿalā qalbihi wa-yukhāmiru sirruhu fi lubbihi bi-ḥaythu yahtazz ʿinda samāʿi dhikrihi wa-yaghlibu ʿalā qalbihi mushāhadatuhu wa-yaṣīru mumaththalan* (var. *timthāluhu) bayna ʿaynay baṣīratihi wa-yusbigh allāhu ʿalayhi niʿmatan* (var. *niʿamahu) ẓāhiran wa-bāṭinan wa-yarāhu yaqẓatan wa-manāman wa-yasʾaluhu ʿammā yurid.*

74 With *in* taken here as *in mukhaffafa,* cf. Qurʾan 36:32; Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* [1896], 3rd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1971, vol. 2, 81D. Variant: *inna l-kull,* see above.

> heart, and he becomes apparent *(var.* his figure appears) before the eyes of his inner view *(baṣīra)*. God amply bestows blessing *(var.* his blessings) upon him externally and internally. He sees him (the Prophet) when awake and asleep, and he can ask him whatever he wants.

As in other well-known texts, the goal of the *Ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya* is thus described as the close attachment to the Prophet through the frequent practice of the *ṣalāt ʿalā l-nabī*, which finally leads to the love of the Prophet taking full possession of one's heart, and even to visionary contact with him whilst asleep or awake.[75] This position (*maqām*) is ascribed by Zabīdī to ʿAbdallāh al-Mīrghanī and also to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAydarūs. Other links for this *ṭarīqa* lead to the prominent Fāsī Sufi scholar ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Fāsī (d. 1091/1680), to a Malāmatī shaykh from the Maghreb, Ibrāhīm al-Zarhūnī[76], and to ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565) and his master ʿAlī al-Khawwāṣ (d. 939/1532). Some of the chains overlap with those given for the Uwaysiyya (i.e. those related to Mīrghanī and Shaʿrānī) and for the Malāmatiyya (with Zarhūnī). All of this indicates the importance of such "spiritual" links in Zabīdī's time, and their merger within the Sufi framework of the 17th and 18th centuries. The text confirms their strong historical relation to the Maghreb, and also the central role played by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī for this kind of transmission.[77]

Along with these valued chains, some specific promises of intercession *(shafāʿa)* or even of salvation on Judgement Day, attributed to the founding figures of the respective *ṭarīqa* for their disciples, are likewise communicated to the reader of the *ʿIqd al-jawhar*.[78] One of these promises seems to be of particular importance: The North African scholar and saint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Thaʿālibī (d. 873/1468) had promised Paradise to anybody who saw him, or saw a person who saw him, up until the seventh person in line. Zabīdī's chain reaches him in six steps, thus leaving one more place free for those who will meet Zabīdī! Thaʿālibī's *silsila* was highly cherished in the Maghreb, for example by the prominent Nāṣirī shaykh Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī (d. 1085/1674) whose

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75 On visionary contacts with the Prophet more generally, see Meier, *taṣliya*, 332-346, 369-415, and also the translations added to that volume.

76 Late 9th-early 10th/late 15th-early 16th century, as can be inferred from the *silsila* of the Malāmatiyya; see Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 136 f.

77 On Shaʿrānī, his largely illiterate master ʿAlī al-Khawwāṣ (d. 939/1532), and the Sufi milieu to which they belonged, see Michael Winter's early study, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī*, New Brunswick: Transaction Books 1982; Meier, *taṣliya*, passim (index 640, 650, 659). On Shaʿrānī's *Kitāb al-mizān al-kubrā* and his attempts at verifying and confirming the soundness and authenticity of the four legal schools and their founders by visionary contact with the Prophet, see Radtke, O'Kane, Vikør, O'Fahey, *The Exoteric Aḥmad Ibn Idrīs*, 15-19; see also Samuela Pagani, "The Meaning of Ikhtilāf al-madhāhib in ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī's *al-Mizān al-Kubrā*", *Islamic Law and Society* 11 (2004), 177-212.

78 On this, see Reichmuth, "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", 396; Zabīdī, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (ed. Koçak), 92 (Shādhiliyya), 106 (Ṭarīqat Sīdī Yaʿqūb al-Bādīsī), 118 (Ghāziyya, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Thaʿālibī), 123 (Qādiriyya), 146 (Hizmīriyya).

disciple Ḥasan al-Yūsī (1102/1691) defended it against fierce critics.[79] Zabīdī seems indeed to have made use of this promise himself: according to a Maghribī source he once declared that those who prayed behind him would have their sins forgiven.[80] The promise bears obvious resemblance to a famous *ḥadīth* which is discussed at length by Qushāshī: "Blessed is he who saw me and believed in me, and he who saw somebody who saw me, and he who saw somebody who saw somebody who saw me."[81] It indicates the significance of the search for visionary contacts with the Prophet which were seen in these Sufi circles as providing blessing (and sometimes authority) for several generations.

Conclusion

The *ʿIqd al-jawhar* is concluded with a general *ijāza* – quoted again from Qushāshī's *Simṭ* – for all those who met Zabīdī and who obtained the text from him, for the attending persons who are mentioned by name, and for those who are connected with him through any Sufi act of transmission (*dhikr, bayʿa, khirqa,* or all of them).[82] As argued earlier, the whole set of *ṭuruq*, their blessings and their mediated contacts with the Prophet and with other spiritual essences are thus placed at the disposal of Zabīdī's disciples and friends for further transmission. In theory, almost all the major strands of the Islamic Sufi tradition have been tied here into a single bundle.[83] This mainly reflects the efforts of the Medinese line of Akbarian Sufi scholars of the 11th/17th century (Shinnāwī – Qushāshī – Kūrānī – ʿUjaymī) and their heritage which they had left for future generations to build upon. Apart from their collections of *ṭuruq,* which paralleled their strong interests in the Prophetic Tradition, a merger of Akbarian concepts and Salafi inclinations in matters of religious doctrine and belief can also be observed in them, especially in Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī and his remarkable interest in the theological positions of Ḥanbalī authors like Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.[84]

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79 al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī, *al-Muḥāḍarāt fī l-adab wa-l-lugha*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥajjī and Aḥmad al-Sharqāwī Iqbāl, Beirut: Dār al-Maghrib al-islāmī 1402/1982, 231 ff.; see also for the visionary reputation of Thaʿālibī, Meier, *taṣliya,* 353, 527, 612.

80 Ḥajjī, *Mawsūʿat,* vol. 7, 2444.

81 Qushāshī, *Simṭ,* 134 ff.: *ṭūbā li-man raʾānī wa-āmana bī / wa-man raʾā man raʾānī / wa-man raʾā man raʾā man raʾāni*. On this utterance, which is attested for a number of earlier Sufis, among them Abū Saʿīd Abū l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), see Fritz Meier, *Abū Saʿīd Abū l-Ḫair*, 396, 452 f., and also Meier, *taṣliya,* 354.

82 Zabidi, *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamin* (ed. Koçak), 148 ff.; cf. Qushāshī, *Simṭ,* 80.

83 Reichmuth, "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî", 396 f.

84 On this El-Rouayheb, see *Islamic Intellectual History,* ch. 8, 272-311, ch. 9, 312-332, especially concerning Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī and his support for the important theological positions of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, which went along rather seamlessly with a resolute defense of Ibn ʿArabī and the "Unity of Existence" *(waḥdat al-wujūd).*

Zabīdī inscribes himself into this heritage, especially with respect to his combination of Sufi and *ḥadīth* orientations. Even if he remained a firm adherent of Māturīdite theology, he also shows clear interest in the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, as he quotes them several times, at times approvingly, at others in critical discussion, in his commentary of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*.[85] He also expresses sympathies for Qushāshī's and Kūrānī's theological critique of Ashʿarite occasionalism, and supports their Akbarian argument in favour of human agency, which for them results from a manifestation of God's attribute of power in man.[86] His three works on his Sufi transmissions which have been presented here show a characteristic development from an individual collection to a general lexicon of *ṭuruq,* together with an introduction into common elements of Sufi practice. Here, as with his other writings, he moved well beyond the limits of the established genres of scholarly literature.[87]

In a wider historical perspective, the tradition of the Sufi collections of *ṭuruq,* which here could be traced to as far back as the 15th century, might indeed be seen as responding to a sense of growing distance from the Prophetic times, and to the political and cultural changes which had transformed the Muslim world since the later Middle Ages. The famous *ḥadīth* topos of Islam becoming a Stranger *(gharīb)* in the World had been analysed and interpreted in detail as early as the late 8th/14th century by Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393), himself a prominent Ḥanbalī scholar of Damascus who in his *Kashf al-kurba fi waṣf ahl al-ġurba* betrays strong sympathies for the early Muslim ascetics and mystics and their withdrawal from the world.[88] It was also recalled by Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), long before its anti-Sufi use by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792) and his movement.[89]

The response which was developed (with antecedents, to be sure) by the Akbarian Sufis of Mecca and Medina and their successors rested on the establishment of a genealogical legitimacy for Sufism analogous to *ḥadīth,* in combination with their claims on a continuous spiritual presence of the Prophet Muḥammad and of other sources of divine guidance and blessing. Performative initiation was recast into a

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85 Reichmuth, *World,* 295.

86 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 294-302; on Zabīdī's sympathetic outline of Qushāshī's and Kūrānī's arguments, see Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn bi-sharḥ <Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn>*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, vol. 2, 266-269.

87 On this see Reichmuth, *World,* 92 ff., 154-160.

88 Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Kashf al-kurba fi waṣf ahl al-ghurba,* ed. Farīd b. Muḥammad Fuwayla, Fāraskūr: Dār Ibn Rajab 1423/2002, with sayings quoted from famous early ascetics and mystics like Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh, Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī, and Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ; see esp. pp. 47-53. For Ibn Rajab, *GAL* II, 107, *S* II, 129.

89 For Sirhindī, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* [1971], New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2000, 16; for Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, see Martin Riexinger, "'Der Islam begann als Fremder, und als Fremder wird er wiederkehren': Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhābs Prophetenbiographie *Muḫtaṣar sīrat ar-rasūl* als Programm und Propaganda", *Die Welt des Islams* 55 (2015), 1-61.

network of transmissions of Sufi *salāsil.* This combination could enhance the position of individual scholars and masters; on the other hand it could contribute to the emergence of new patterns of Sufi organization and reformist political movements. The merger of the multiple chains of transmission with direct access to the Prophet and to other "spiritual essences" *(rūḥāniyyāt)* prepared the ground for the so-called 'centralized brotherhoods' like the Nāṣiriyya, Khalwatiyya Bakriyya, Sammāniyya, Tijāniyya, Khatmiyya, and Sanūsiyya, which emerged between the 17th and early 19th century.[90] Some of them, like the Tijāniyya and Khatmiyya, became highly exclusive in their spiritual claims.

At the same time, however, the inherent generalizing trend and the accumulation of blessing made available to the individual Sufi could equally run counter to such centralized authority. Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d. 1253/1837), master of the founders of both Sanūsiyya and Khatmiyya and strongly committed to the visionary practice of the *Ṭariqa muḥammadiyya,* was himself apparently without organizational ambitions and remained satisfied with his role as teacher and preacher.[91] Qushāshī himself, although strongly Akbarian in his outlook, had denied the exclusivity of the status of a "seal of sainthood" which Ibn ʿArabī had claimed. He insisted on the openness of access to this rank for anybody who reached the same spiritual level in every age up until the Day of Judgement, and even ascribed it to himself.[92] Even if he enumerated his own affiliations to a considerable number of *ṭuruq,* he did not lay particular weight on any of them, and his Sufism seems to defy any specific organizational commitment. The same can be said, a century later, of Zabīdī who was active in four Sufi *ṭuruq* but did not found a *ṭarīqa* of his own, despite his comprehensive collection which he made instead available for general use among his students and sympathizers. In his case, Sufism clearly remained firmly bound to his philological and literary activities. If seen in connection with his other interests in theology and the natural sciences, he arguably represents a type of 'Sufi humanism' which would perfectly suit the encyclopaedic scholar and teacher but would also provide a model for a wide range of persons active in other offices, professions, and trades among his students, friends, and visitors.[93] Apart from the pervasive influence of the Meccan and Medinese Sufi scholars of the 17th and 18th century on the aforementioned brotherhoods with their centralizing claims for religious authority, there was thus an individualizing tendency[94] which

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90 On this see e. g. Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons,* 50-82; Ali Salih Karrar, *The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan,* London: Hurst 1992, 42-102; Jamil Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life,* London: Hurst 2007, 127-177.

91 O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, 107-113.

92 Chih, "Rattachement initiatique", 192 f.

93 See Reichmuth, *World*, xiv-xx; 269 ff., 334; s. a., "Murtadâ al-Zabîdî and his Role in 18th Century Sufism", 404 f.

94 Already discussed by Albrecht Hofheinz, *Internalizing Islam: Shaykh Muḥammad Majdhūb, Scriptural Islam, and Local Context in the Early Nineteenth-Century Sudan,* PhD Dissertation, University of Bergen 1996, vol. 1, 551-555.

could as well be derived from the comprehensive transmissions and the pious practice of these masters. In a still highly variegated world of Sufism with its regional, as well as trans-regional, traditions, both the centralist and individualist trends, which are sometimes at odds with one another, have given Sufism a good deal of its specific dynamics since the early modern period.

Appendix: *List of the* ṭuruq *described and transmitted by Zabīdī in* A. Risāla fi lubs al-khirqa/Abwāb al-saʿāda, B. Itḥāf al-aṣfiyāʾ, *and* C. ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn

(In cases where one *ṭarīqa* is labelled as a branch of another, the original is mentioned in brackets. Names of *ṭuruq* with transmissions via Abū l-Futūḥ al-Ṭāwūsī have been underlined.)

1. Abhariyya (Suhrawardiyya) [A; C only with reference under Suhrawardiyya] 2. Adhamiyya [B, C] 3. Aḥmadiyya (< Aḥmad al-Rifāʿi) [A; in B and C under Rifāʿiyya] 4. Aḥmadiyya (< Aḥmad al-Badawī, Shādhiliyya) [A, B, C] 5. Aḥmadiyya (< Aḥmad as-Sirhindī, Naqshbandiyya) [A, B, C] 6. Aḥmadiyya (Chishtiyya) [C] 7. Aḥrāriyya (Naqshbandiyya) [A; in B and C under Naqshbandiyya] 8. Ashrafiyya (Chishtiyya) [B, C] 9. Ilyāsiyya [C] 10. Ahdaliyya (Qādiriyya) [B, C] 11. Uwaysiyya [B, C]

12. Bājiyya [C] 13. Bākharziyya [C] 14. Bajliyya (Qādiriyya) [B, C] 15. Bukhāriyya [B, C] 16. Burhāniyya (Shādhiliyya) [B, C] 17. Buzghashiyya [B, C] 18. Bisṭāmiyya [B, C] 19. Bakkāʾiyya [B] 20. Bakriyya [B, C] 21. Baktāshiyya (Ṣafawiyya) [B] 22. Bakiyya [B, C] 23. Bahāʾiyya (Shihābiyya) [C] 24. Bayāniyya (Nabaʾiyya) [B, C]) 25. Bayḍāwiyya (Khaḍiriyya) [C]

26. Tājiyya (Naqshbandiyya) [B, C]

27. Jabartiyya (Ahdaliyya) [C] 28. Juzūliyya (Shādhiliyya) [B, C] 29. Jishtiyya (Chishtiyya) [B, C] 30. Jāmiyya [C] 31. Junaydiyya [B, C] 32. Jahriyya (Khaḍiriyya) [B, C]

33. Ḥātimiyya [B] 34. Ḥarālliyya [B, C] 35. *khirqat* Sayyidī Jamāl al-Dīn al-Kūrānī [B] 36. Ḥuraythiyya (Junaydiyya) [C] 37. Ḥakamiyya (Qādiriyya) [B, C] 38. Ḥalabiyya (Aḥmadiyya, no. 4) [B, C] 39. Ḥallājiyya (Junaydiyya) [B, C] 40. Ḥammuwiyya (Junaydiyya, Khaḍiriyya) [B, C] 41. Ḥaydariyya (Jishtiyya) [B, C]

42. Khaḍiriyya [B, C] 43. Khuḍayriyya (B: Buzghashiyya, C: Suhrawardiyya) [B, C] 44. Kharrāziyya (Yaʿqūbiyya) [B, C] 45. Khalawiyya [B] 46. Khalwatiyya (Suhrawardiyya) [B, C] 47. Khawāṭiriyya (Madyaniyya) [B, C]

48. Dardāʾiyya [C] 49. Daqqāqiyya [B] 50. Damirdāshiyya (Khalwatiyya) [B, C]

51. Rūzbihāniyya (Murshidiyya) 52. Rifāʿiyya (B: Junaydiyya) [B, C] 53. Rukniyya (Kubrawiyya) [B, C] 54. Rawshaniyya (Khalwatiyya) [C]

55. Zarkūbiyya (B: Suhrawardiyya, C: Shihābiyya) [B, C] 56. Zarrūqiyya (B: Shādhiliyya) [B, C] 57. Zanfaliyya (Aḥmadiyya, no. 4) [B, C] 58. Zaylaʿiyya (Qādiriyya) (in B under Ṭarīqat al-Zaylaʿī] [B, C]

59. Sāḥiliyya [B, C] 60. Sabtiyya (Madyaniyya) [B, C] 61. Sabʿīniyya (Junaydiyya, in B under Ṭarīqat Ibn Sabʿīn) [B, C] 62. Suṭūḥiyya [B] 63. Saʿdiyya (Junaydiyya) [B, C] 64. Saʿīdiyya [B, C] 65. Suʿūdiyya (B: Rifāʿiyya, C: *khirqa*) [B, C] 66. Suʿūdiyya (Suhrawardiyya) [B] 67. Salāmiyya (Aḥmadiyya no. 4) [C] 68. Silafiyya (*khirqa*) [C] 69. Salimiyya (Jishtiyya) [B] 70. Sanūsiyya (< Madyaniyya) [B] 71. Sahramīniyya (*khirqa*) [C] 72. Suhrawardiyya [B, C]

73. Shādhiliyya [B, C] 74. Shurayḥiyya [C] 75. Shaṭṭāriyya (B: Bisṭāmiyya, C: ʿIshqiyya) [B, C] 76. Shushtariyya [C] 77. Shuʿaybiyya (Aḥmadiyya, no. 4) [B, C] 78. Shinnāwiyya (Aḥmadiyya, no. 4) [B, C] 79. Shanbakiyya (Jubayriyya) [C] 80. Shihābiyya (Suhrawardiyya) [B, C] 81. Shahāwiyya (Burhāniyya) [B, C] 82. Shahbāziyya (Bukhāriyya) [B, C]

83. Ṣādiqiyya [B, C] 84. Ṣiddīqiyya (Bakriyya) [B, C] 85. Ṣafawiyya (Shihābiyya) [B, C] 86. Sanhājiyya [B, C] 87. Ṣadriyya (Ḥātimiyya) [B]

88. Ṭarīqat Abī Jabal [B] 89. Ṭarīqat Abī Kharrāz [B, C] 90. Ṭarīqat Abī l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qurashī al-Mahdawī al-Uqṣurī (Madyaniyya) [B] 91. Ṭarīqat Abī Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ [B] 92. Ṭarīqat Abī Ṭālib (al-Makkī) [B, C] 93. Ṭarīqat Abī Yaʿzā (Madyaniyya) [B] 94. Ṭarīqat Ibn Barrajān [B, C] 95. Ṭarīqat Ibn al-Ḥājj [B] 96. Tarīqat Ibn Ḥirzihim (B: Suhrawardiyya) [B, C] 97. Ṭarīqat Ibn al-Zayyāt [B, C] 98. Ṭarīqat Ibn ʿAbbād [B] 99. Ṭarīqat Ibn ʿUayl (Qādiriyya) [B, C] 100. Tarīqat Ibn al-ʿArīf (Junaydiyya) [B, C] 101. Ṭarīqat Ibn ʿArrāq [B. C] 102. Ṭarīqat Bā Ḥaddād [B] 103. Ṭarīqat al-Nahārī [B, C] 104. Ṭarīqat al-Sijilmāsī [B] 105. Ṭarīqat Sīdī Abī Yaʿqūb al-Bādisī [B, C] 106. Ṭarīqat Sīdī ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī [B, C] 107. Ṭarīqat Sīdī Fatḥ Allāh al-ʿAjamī al-Awadhī (Chishtiyya) [B, C] 108. Ṭarīqat al-Ṭawāshī (Qādiriyya) [C] 109. Ṭarīqat al-Mashāriʿa (Qādiriyya) [C] 110. Ṭarīqat al-Muḥāsibī [B, C] 111. Tāwūsiyya (B. ʿAlawiyya, C: Junaydiyya) [B, C]

112. ʿĀdiliyya (Buzghashiyya) [B, C] 113. ʿAbbāsiyya (*khirqa*, *ṭarīqa*) [C] 114. ʿUrābiyya [B, C] 115. ʿIshqiyya [B, C] 116. ʿAlwāniyya (< Alwān al-Ḥamawī) [B, C] 117. ʿAlwāniyya (< Aḥmad b. ʿAlwān al-Yamanī) [C] 118. ʿUmūdiyya (Madyaniyya) [B, C] 119. ʿAydarūsiyya (Madyaniyya) [B, C]

120. Ghāziyya (in B under Ṭarīqat al-Ghāzī) [B, C] 121. Ghazzāliyya (*khirqa*) (B: Junaydiyya) [B, C] 122. Ghammāthiyya (B: Hizmīriyya) [B, C] 123. Ghawthiyya (Shāṭṭāriyya) [B, C] 124. Ghaythiyya (Qādiriyya, in B under Ṭarīqat Abī l-Ghayth) [B, C]

125. Fārūqiyya [B] 126. Firdawsiyya (Bākharziyya) [C]

127. Qādiriyya [B, C] 128. Qāsimiyya [B, C] 129. Qushayriyya (Junaydiyya) [B, C] 130. Qaṣriyya (< Abū l-Ḥasan b. ʿAbdallāh al-Qaṣrī [B] 131. Qaṣriyya (< Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Jalīl al-Anṣārī al-Awsī al-Qaṣrī [B]

132. Karduwiyya (Khaḍiriyya) [C] 133. Kubrawiyya [B, C] 134. Kirmāniyya (Khaḍiriyya) [C] 135. Kabīriyya (Junaydiyya < Ibn Khafīf) 136. Kulshāniyya (Gulshāniyya, Khalwatiyya) [B, C]

137. Muʾammaliyya (Junaydiyya) [C] 138. Majdūliyya [B, C] 139. Muḥammadiyya [B, C] 140. Madāriyya [B, C] 141. Madyaniyya (in B under Ṭarīqat Abī Madyan al-Ghawth) [B, C] 142. Murshidiyya [B, C] 143. Mashīshiyya (Madyaniyya) [C] 144. Muʿammariyya [C] 145. Malāmatiyya [B, C] 146. Mahdawiyya [B, C] 147. Mawlawiyya [B, C]

148. Nasīmiyya [B] 149. Nuʿmāniyya (Junaydiyya) [C] 150. Naqshbandiyya [B, C] 151. Nūḥiyya (Aḥmadiyya no. 4) [B] 152. Nūriyya (Kubrawiyya) [B, C] 153. Nūrbakhshiyya [B]

154. Wafāʾiyya (Shādhiliyya) [C]

155. Harawiyya [B, C] 156. Hizmīriyya (Khaḍiriyya) [B, C] 157. Hamadāniyya (Kubrawiyya) [B, C]

158. Yaʿqūbiyya (Khaḍiriyya) [C]

Part II
The Staging and Performance of Texts

Between Poem and Ritual: The *Burda* by al-Būṣīrī (d. 1294-1297)

Ines Weinrich

During my fieldwork in Beirut, I came across a particular poem again and again. In the beginning, I did not always recognize it, as it appeared in different forms regarding both its text and melody. It was the renowned poem *al-Burda* by the Mamluk poet al-Būṣīrī, and soon I had the opportunity to attend a performance of the complete poem of which I had hitherto only heard selected parts. Two features struck me: firstly, the performed versions differed from the original poem and secondly, there were parts to it which seemed to belong to it but could not be found in any of its scholarly editions.

Suzanne Stetkevych has convincingly shown how the poem works as an exchange ritual between the poet, or the reciter of the poem, and the subject of praise (here the prophet Muḥammad) and has coined the term "supplicatory ode" for this kind of praise poetry.[1] This notwithstanding, Stetkevych's analysis relies on a written version of the poem. In the following, I will compare her findings with my observances of contemporary performance practices. In what ways does the vocal rendition of the poem differ from the written text? And what impact would these differences have on the meaning, function, and efficacy of the poem?[2]

The poet and his poem

Despite the wide circulation of his poems, biographical data about the poet is sparse.[3] Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī was born in 1212 in Upper Egypt and died between 1294 and 1297 in Cairo. He earned his living as a scribe, a reciter of the Qur'an, and as a minor administrator. He repeatedly addressed his

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1 Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2010, chapter two, for the supplicatory ode esp. 91.

2 This article is part of a broader research project on the functions and manifestations of religious chanting (*al-inshād al-dinī*) in Islamic religious practice. The project deliberately focuses on Sunni Islam, as mystic and minority groups tend to be overrepresented in the study of auditory dimensions. The presented examples are based on fieldwork conducted between 2009 and 2011 in Beirut, Lebanon.

3 The earliest available information on the poet is found in Muḥammad b. Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, vol. 3, Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir 1974, 362-369; Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Sven Dedering, vol. 3, Beirut: Klaus Schwarz 2008, 105-113; Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Yaʿlāwī, vol. 5, Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī 1991, 661-669. See also Th. Emil Homerin, "al-Būṣīrī", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Gudrun Krämer et al., Brill 2011, Brill Online (accessed 9 November 2011).

poems to Mamluk officials like Zayn al-Dīn Yaʿqūb Ibn al-Zubayr and the vizier Bahāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad (known as Ibn Ḥannā). His poems are credited with being a useful source on Mamluk society, with their sometimes witty and harsh critique of persons and incidents.[4] His religious poetry – praise poems to Muḥammad – represents only a small part of his poetic oeuvre; yet today it is the best known part of it.

If there is anything that could be called a standard written version of the *Burda*, it would be the one in al-Būṣīrī's *dīwān* edited by Muhammad Sayyid Kīlānī.[5] The *Burda*, as it appears here, has 160 verses, rhymed in *mīm*; the metre is *basīṭ*. A reference to the famous poem *Bānat Suʿād* (Suʿād has Departed) by Kaʿb Ibn Zuhayr, a contemporary of the prophet, the poem is technically a *muʿāraḍa* (imitation in rhyme and metre) of ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ's (d. 1235) *Hal nāru Laylā* (Was that Laylā's Fire).

Shortly after the death of al-Būṣīrī, his *Burda* became the subject of numerous commentaries and poetic imitations.[6] It became conventional to divide it into thematic sections (*fuṣūl*). Stetkevych follows the division of the 16th-century commentary by Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī into ten parts which can be also found in other commentaries.[7] I encountered the same division with only minor changes in some of the section's titles during my fieldwork. I agree with Stetkevych that such a division does not only have advantages. Acknowledging its usefulness for

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4 Cf. Th. Emil Homerin, "'Our Sorry State!' Al-Būṣīrī's Lamentations on Life and an Appeal for Cash", *Mamlūk Studies Review* 14 (2010), 19-29; see also the examples quoted in al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 363-367 and the assessment of Zakī Mubārak, *al-Madāʾiḥ al-nabawiyya wa-madīḥ ahl al-bayt* [Cairo 1935], rev. ed., Damascus: Maktabat al-Sharq al-jadīd 1997, 142-147.

5 *Dīwān al-Būṣīrī*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kīlānī, Cairo: Maktabat wa-maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī 1955, 190-201. This edition is used by Sperl for his analysis and translation, cf. "al-Būṣīrī", in: *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, vol. 2: *Eulogy's Bounty, Meaning's Abundance. An Anthology*, Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, eds, Leiden: Brill 1996, 388-411 (Arabic text with English translation), 470-476 (analysis). Stetkevych used the text in al-Ghazzī's commentary (Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *al-Zubda fī sharḥ al-Burda*), supplemented by the commentaries by al-Bājūrī and al-Azharī (Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 274, n. 46); the verse numbering in Stetkevych and the *Dīwān* shows no differences. Therefore, for the Arabic text I use al-Būṣīrī, *Dīwān*. There are numerous books, leaflets, and prayer collections that contain the *Burda* in slightly different versions with respect to the number of verses and single words.

6 Cf. the listing in Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, vol. 1, Leiden: Brill 1943, 265f.; Suppl. 467 f. The editor of al-Azharī's commentary gives a list of "famous commentaries", cf. *Sharḥ al-Shaykh al-Imām Khālid al-Azharī ʿalā matn al-Burda al-būṣīriyya fī madḥ khayr al-bariyya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḥasan, Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus 1966, 15 ff.

7 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 90f. Although the ten-part division is a very common one, it is not the only one. See for instance the translations by von Rosenzweig and Ralfs who used manuscripts dividing the poem into eight parts: Vincenz Edlem von Rosenzweig, *Funkelnde Wandelsterne zum Lobe des Besten der Geschöpfe. Ein arabisches, insgemein unter dem Namen Gedicht Burde bekanntes Gedicht*, Vienna: Anton Schmid 1824; *Die Burda. Ein Lobgedicht auf Muḥammad von al-Buṣīrī (sic). Neu herausgegeben im arabischen Text mit metrischer persischer und türkischer Übersetzung, ins Deutsche übertragen und mit Anmerkungen versehen von C.A. Ralfs, bevorwortet von Dr. Walter Behrnauer*, Vienna: Kaiserliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei 1860.

a thematic and structural overview, she states: "The division is neither original nor essential to the poem and has the effect of breaking up the poetic sequence or flow of the lines and the transitional passages."[8]

Nevertheless, as the division is relevant for contemporary performances, I shall present it here in order to give a structural overview, using the titles I encountered in fieldwork which are sometimes slightly simplified in comparison with the titles in al-Ghazzī[9].

No.	title	verses
I	worldly love and complaint	1-12[10]
II	warning against the desires of the soul	13-28
III	praise for the noble messenger	29-58
IV	about his birth	59-71
V	about his miracles	72-87
VI	about the noble Qur'an	88-104
VII	about his night journey and ascension	105-117
VIII	about the *jihād* and military campaigns of the messenger	118-139
IX	supplication	140-151
X	prayer and petition	152-160

Figure 1: The structure of the poem, divided into ten sections.

The poem opens with a lyric-elegiac prelude (*nasīb*), naming topographical places of the Hijaz region in the first two verses, which indicates a religious connotation. Typically, however, the identity of the beloved is not revealed; it shifts between a worldly love, a love of God or of the Prophet, thus remaining ambiguous.

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8 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 90.

9 See for his titles Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 90 f.

10 11 (Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 90) is obviously a misspelling, as in the Arabic text in the appendix the second section starts with v. 13 (p. 245). See also Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *al-Zubda fī sharḥ al-Burda*, ed. ʿUmar Mūsā Bāshā, Algiers: Wizārat al-thaqāfa 2007, 6, 52 (this edition of al-Ghazzī's commentary contains two additional verses, 58 and 64 according to his numbering).

1 Was it the memory of those you loved at Dhū Salam
That made you weep so hard your tears were mixed with blood?[11]

This opening section is followed by a warning against the desires of the self, epitomized by the soul (v. 13). The wilful soul, which needs to be tamed, is a typical topos in Sufi teaching and poetry. al-Būṣirī uses the term "al-ammāra bi-l-sūʾ" ("the persistent inciter of evil", Qur'an 12:53), an expression which was frequently explained when the verse was performed on various occasions during my fieldwork.

The *madīḥ* (praise for the prophet) is introduced by the setting up of a contrast between the poet and the prophet; the poet's inclination towards the amenities of life stands vis-à-vis the prophet's commitment to vigil prayers which extends to the embracing of physical suffering:

29 I have profaned the Path of him whose night prayers brought the darkness to life
Until his feet complained of pain and swelling.

This comparison leads to the famous verse 34 which is characterized by Stefan Sperl as a "ringing fanfare which marks the true beginning of the *madīḥ*"[12]. Indeed, this verse is, like verse 36, often inserted into performances of general *inshād*.

34 Muḥammad, the master of all who dwell in both the seen and unseen worlds,
Of both corporeal species, men and jinn, of the two races, ʿArab and ʿAjam.

36 He is the beloved of God whose intercession is hoped for
In the face of every dread and unexpected horror.

The *madīḥ* is further divided into thematic units following the prophet's life and deeds: his birth (*mawlid*), his miracles (*muʿjizāt*), the Qur'an, his night journey and ascension to heaven (*al-isrāʾ wa-l-miʿrāj*), and his *jihād* and military campaigns (*ghazawāt*).

The last two sections are devoted to petition (*tawassul*) and fervent prayer (*munājāh*). The poem ends by asking God to eternally bestow blessings upon Muḥammad, a request enveloped in the metaphorical semantic field of water as a blessing in the physical and social environment of the Arab Peninsula:

159 And let clouds of prayer from You rain down unceasingly upon the Prophet
In heavy downpours and in steady rains

160 For as long as the eastern breeze stirs the bough of the ben-tree
And the camel driver stirs his light-hued beasts with song.

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11 Throughout the article, I use the English translation of Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, starting 92, except for using "God" instead of "Allāh". Dhū Salam is a place between Mecca and Medina, cf. al-Bājūrī, *al-Burda li-l-imām al-Būṣiri. Bi-hāmishihā Mukhtaṣar sharḥ shaykh al-islām al-shaykh Ibrāhim al-Bājūri*, Cairo: al-Ādāb 1998, 33. It is impossible to do justice to the literary quality of the poem here. In our context, the short description serves simply to make the readers acquainted with it. See, for a literary evaluation, Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, chapter two.

12 Sperl, "al-Būṣīrī", 471.

The story line of the poem, with regard to the inner states of the lyrical I, would run as follows: awareness and acknowledgment, repentance, self-abasement, praise, and imploration. As Stetkevych points out, the poem follows the structure of the panegyrical *qaṣīda*, with the prophet replacing the role of the ruler. She characterizes the poem as a "panegyrical pact"[13] between the supplicant and the supplicated, the poet and the subject of praise. The subject of this mutual agreement is praise from the one side and protection – in the language of court poetry – or intercession (*shafāʿa*) – in religious language – from the other side.

The double Burda

Together with the poem comes the story of its composition in the early sources:

> al-Būṣīrī said: […] I was stricken with hemiplegia that left me half paralyzed, and I thought of composing this poem, the *Burda*, so I composed it. I asked with it for intercession with God the Exalted so that he would give me strength. I repeated its recitation, and I wept and prayed and plead. Then I fell asleep, and I saw the prophet pbuh who stroked my face with his beneficent hand and covered me with a mantle. I woke up and found myself able to get up. So I left the house and did not tell anybody about what had happened.[14]

This story provides the link to Kaʿb Ibn Zuhayr who, according to tradition, was granted a mantle (*burda*) for his poem by the prophet. Of course, a link already exists through the shared thematic progression of both poems.[15] It is noteworthy that the link to Kaʿb Ibn Zuhayr's *Burda* is reported early on: both al-Ṣafadī and al-Kutubī died less than seventy years after al-Būṣīrī, namely in 1363. Another eighty years later, al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442) introduces al-Būṣīrī as "ṣāḥib al-burda" (the one who wrote the *Burda*).[16]

The story does not end here. Significantly, the poet mentions that he has not told anybody about it, because outside his house he meets a Sufi (*faqīr*) who says:

> "I want you to give me the poem you praised God's messenger pbuh with." I asked: "Which one?" He said: "The one you composed while you were ill", and he quoted its first

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13 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 91.

14 al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 112; an almost identical version appears in al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 368. Translations are mine unless indicated otherwise. al-Ṣafadī does not give his source for the story, although he notes that he has obtained al-Būṣīrī's poems from Athīr al-Dīn Abū Ḥayyān who had received them from al-Būṣīrī (al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 111); see also Homerin, "Lamentations", 20 f.

15 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 69, 92.

16 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, 661. Both al-Ṣafadī and al-Kutubī place the story of the *Burda* at the end of their entry about the poet, whereas in al-Maqrīzī's biographical lexicon the reference to the *Burda* figures prominently at the beginning as a means to identify the poet. The poem also appears under the title "al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī madḥ khayr al-bariyya" (Pearly Stars in Praise of the Best of All Creation), as al-Būṣīrī himself had named it (Kīlānī, "Muqaddima", in: al-Būṣīrī, *Dīwān*, 5-47, here 29); besides these, a handful of other names, mostly epithets, exist.

> line. [He continued:] "By God, we heard it yesterday when it was recited in front of God's messenger pbuh, and I saw him pbuh swaying because he liked it. And he covered the one who recited it with a mantle." So I gave it to him.[17]

The Sufi spreads the story, until it reaches the vizier Bahāʾ al-Dīn who asks for a copy and subsequently forms the habit of listening to the poem together with his family.

And there is a third story: later, a certain Saʿd al-Dīn al-Fāriqī suffered from an eye infection. Threatened with blindness, he had a dream in which he was told to put "the *burda*" on his eyes in order to recover. He went to the vizier and told him about his dream, but the vizier wondered: "'I don't know anything about such a relic of the prophet pbuh like the *burda* [thinking of the actual mantle, a relic that was used by Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs]'. After some thinking he proposed: 'Maybe the poem "al-burda" is what is meant'". He ordered the box of relics to be opened and the poem to be brought to him. And the end of the story goes: "Saʿd al-Dīn took it and put it on his eyes and recovered. From that day on, it [the poem] was called 'al-Burda'".[18]

In all these stories, we encounter a beautiful climax. Not only does the poem provide healing for its composer, other people also seek to receive its blessing, as the message of its power has spread without any effort by the poet. Whereas the link to the mantle in the first story is established only in the dream, in the last story the poem reaches the same (physical) status as the mantle. This story teaches two things: there are two *burdas*, and the poem-*burda* is, as a relic, as effective as the mantle-*burda*. Whereas the mantle was a relic for the caliphs[19], the poem is available for everybody and this has further added to the appeal of the poem. Throughout history, it has been recited communally and collectively in public on various occasions.[20]

Performance practices

How is a 13th-century *qaṣīda* (poem) of at least 160 verses performed? *Qaṣīda* also exists as a vocal genre in Arab musical culture. Here, it denotes a soloist genre, performed by a solo singer and a small instrumental ensemble. In comparison to other vocal genres like *dawr* or *muwashshaḥ*, no fixed form (*qālib*) is prescribed for this genre. The singer may take great liberties in both melodic and rhythmic exe-

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17 al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 112; with only minor modifications in al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 368 f.

18 al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 112 f.; with only minor modifications in al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 369.

19 On the mantle relic, see Rudi Paret, "Die Legende von der Verleihung des Prophetenmantels (*burda*) an Kaʿb ibn Zuhair", *Der Islam* 17 (1928), 9-14.

20 Furthermore, the poem was used as an amulet, single verses of it were prescribed for the treatment of certain problems, and a whole branch of literature (*khawāṣṣ al-Burda*) emerged on these issues. During my fieldwork, these aspects had no relevance; only the healing of the poet and his encounter with the Sufi were frequently cited.

cution. He or she can choose to insert repetitions of lines, phrases, or words and include melismatic passages as much as he/she feels necessary to deliver the text to its listeners. This is the way the legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kulthūm (d. 1975) performed the poem *Nahj al-Burda* (The Way of the Mantle) by Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932).[21] For the traditional yet modernized *qaṣīda* composition by the renowned musician Riyāḍ al-Sunbāṭī (d. 1981), 30 out of its 190 verses were chosen.[22] A studio recording takes only 21.40 minutes[23]; live performances could take more than double that time. Whilst no strophic structure emerges in this composition, we find an acoustic structuring through the change of melody corresponding to the changes of theme in the text.

The performances of the *Burda* presented here differ remarkably from this model. They stem from the context of various religious celebrations which include festive commemorations of important events in the prophet's life and Islamic history, of the birth or death of prominent religious figures, Ramadan ceremonies, or prayer gatherings. Such celebrations feature a small performance ensemble (*firqa*) which carries out the *inshād* (chanting). *firqa* is the technical name for any musical performance group; *firqat al-inshād* (performance ensemble for religious chanting) designates groups which perform on religious occasions. A *firqa* consists of a solo singer and a chorus of four to eight men; often one or two frame drums are also employed. *Inshād* is used here to denote various genres of the artistically elaborate articulation of religious texts, like prayers, benedictions, doxology, or praise for the prophet. In the following, I shall present three different contexts, versions, performance practices, and possible functions of *Burda* performances.[24]

Performance context 1: laylat al-qadr *in 2009*

One of my first encounters with the *Burda* was during the commemoration of *laylat al-qadr*[25] in 2009 in the Muḥammad Amīn Mosque in Downtown Beirut, organized by *Dār al-fatwā*, the Sunni representation at government level. The performance took place around 2.30 a.m. and was framed by the solo performance of a prayer

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21 The Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī wrote *Nahj al-Burda* as an imitation of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*. See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, chapter three for the poem.

22 See for the text Khalīl al-Miṣrī and Maḥmūd Kāmil, eds, *al-Nuṣūṣ al-kāmila li-jamīʿ aghānī kawkab al-sharq Umm Kulthūm*, Cairo: Muḥammad al-Amīn 1975, 265 f. The *qaṣīda* was first performed in 1946. For more about the composition and its context see Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1997, 110-117, 148 f.

23 *Oum Kalsoum*. MANTEDB513. Union Square Music Ltd. London 2007.

24 The more general and comparative remarks are based on 15 field recordings of the *Burda* and observations of more performances that were not recorded but documented in field notes.

25 *Laylat al-qadr* commemorates the sending down of the Qur'an. It is celebrated on the uneven nights of the last third of Ramadan, most commonly on the 27th night.

(*duʿāʾ*) and vigil prayers (*ṣalāt al-tahajjud*). I could not see the performing group[26] as the mosque was overcrowded and we were sitting on mats that were spread outside the mosque on the street. The performance was broadcast via the minaret's loudspeakers, while the group was inside the mosque. The group featured a soloist and a chorus of about five men. The performance started with the following text:

Mawlāya ṣalli wa-sallim dāʾiman abadan / ʿalā ḥabībika khayri l-khalqi kullihimi
al-Ḥamdu li-llāhi munshi l-khalqi min ʿadamin / thumma l-ṣalātu ʿalā l-mukhtāri fi l-qidami
A min tadhakkuri jirānin bi-Dhi Salami / mazajta damʿan jarā min muqlatin bi-dami
Mawlāya ṣalli wa-sallim dāʾiman abadan / ʿalā ḥabībika khayri l-khalqi kullihimi

Of these lines, actually only one is part of the *Burda*, namely its first verse starting with "A min tadhakkur …". The line "Mawlāya ṣalli wa-sallim …" ("O my Lord, send your blessings and salutations always and forever / upon your Beloved, the Best of all Creation") is an antiphon which is subsequently performed as a refrain between verses. The second line – praise to God and calling down God's blessings upon Muḥammad – often precedes vocal renditions of the *Burda*, but is rarely included in text editions. The refrain is typically repeated after two verses of the *Burda*. It is sung by everybody, i.e. the chorus and all participants; occasionally the soloist joins in for a few notes to give impulses. The verses are performed by the soloist.

The singing is rhythmic and syllabic, the tempo being rather moderate (about 72 beats per minute). The melody has the range of only a fifth and moves in small steps with the exception of the initial upbeat: here, the melody jumps from the tonic to the fifth from where it descends back to the tonic. Throughout the performance, the melody stays the same, and the refrain is sung to the same tune as the verses. There are, however, some melodic variants: before the refrain, the soloist's tune at the end of the verse temporarily ascends to the seventh and ends on the fifth. This clearly functions as a means of communication to signal that the refrain will follow[27]. Besides this, the soloist sometimes modifies the melody within a verse, also by ascending to the seventh, in order to mark certain words, for instance *ḥabību* [beloved] (v. 36), *khayra* [best] (v. 45), *raḥmata* [mercy] (v. 156)[28]. Despite these minor variants, the pace, the repetitions, range and line of melody suggest a litany character.

For the performance of the poem, only twenty-five verses of its 160 verses are included. One verse is performed twice and two verses are repeated, so that twenty-eight lines are performed altogether. Several verses follow which are not part of the *Burda*. Again, this is often found in *Burda* performances. Whilst the seven verses

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26 But I have seen the group performing on other occasions.

27 When the refrain is inserted after three verses instead of two, the melody rises only after the third verse, i.e. before the refrain.

28 The performance group sometimes uses different words than in al-Būṣīrī, *Dīwān* and in Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*: "khayra" instead of "faḍla" (v. 45), "khalqi" instead of "rusli" (v. 117 and v. 152).

which continue and expand the plea to send down blessings and add a general plea for forgiveness (see p. 117) are typical of other performances, here, only three verses of the seven are performed. Instead, three verses of a different poem are inserted after the *Burda*. These are taken from the *Bāʾiyya* by the Yemeni poet and Sufi ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1720). It was the only occasion that I came across these verses which fit nicely in terms of their content, in their appeal for forgiveness for one who has to account for not having performed enough good deeds. The complete performance takes twelve minutes and ends with the refrain.

Three extraordinary features characterize this performance: the responsorial performance technique featuring an antiphon which also serves as a refrain, its framing by prayer verses before and after the text of the poem, and its reduction to only a few selected verses. Of these, we will first take a closer look at the selection of verses itself. A schematic overview (see figure 2) shows immediately that the verses are not chosen in the original order of their appearance in the poem. Four verses are taken from the *nasīb*, two from the section of the warning against the desires of the soul, but the latter appear at a very late stage of the performance (v. 23 and 24). Seven verses of the praise section are performed, two of them twice. No verses from the sections on birth, miracles, the Qurʾan, *jihād* and military campaigns feature. Instead, eight verses from the section about the night journey and ascension appear, but not in their original order and at different stages of the performance. Finally, one verse from the supplication section and three verses from the last section are performed.

A closer look at the composition of verses reveals that in spite of the 'new' order the inner structure of the poem remains: we find an abridged *nasīb*, a more extensive praise section, and supplication. The praise starts with the same verses as in the original poem, saving the very popular verse 34 for a later stage. Of the night journey and ascension section, only four verses actually deal with the night journey and ascension (v. 107-110), whereas two serve as triumphant praise for the "noblest of nations" (v. 116-117) and two praise and emphasize the prophet's quality as an intercessor (v. 105-106), a quality already introduced in the praise section (v. 36). Intercession (*shafāʿa*) and repentance, combined with the hope for mercy, are the central features of the supplication part.

1 – 3 – 8 – 9		*nasīb*
29 – 30 – 31 – 36 – 43 – 45 – 116 – 117	|	praise
107 – 108 – 109 – 110	|	
34 – 34 – 36	|	praise + *shafāʿa*
148 – 105 – 106 – 152 – 152		supplication + *shafāʿa*
23 – 24 – 155 – 156		repentance + forgiveness

Figure 2: Verses sung in the performance of the *Burda* during *laylat al-qadr*, 2009.

The emphasis on repentance and intercession is not surprising, given the occasion of *laylat al-qadr*, a festive night towards the end of Ramadan, a period of intensified ritual activity and self-reflection. Furthermore, popular ideas connected to *laylat al-qadr*, termed in the Qur'an as "better than a thousand months" (97:3), have evoked the notion that acts performed during this special time would also prompt special reactions. An often quoted saying of the prophet states that "Whoever spends *laylat al-qadr* in prayer out of sincere faith and hoping to attain God's reward will have his sins forgiven."[29] Thus *laylat al-qadr* is a preferred time for intense ritual activity, repentance, petition and the resolution for a 'fresh start'. In this sense, it may gain the function of a New Year. The selection and arrangement of the *Burda* verses support this idea.

The composition of verses in the laylat al-qadr *performance*[30]

1 Was it the memory of those you loved at Dhū Salam
That made you weep so hard your tears were mixed with blood?
3 What ails your eyes? If you say, "Cease!" they flow with tears;
What ails your heart? If you say, "Be still!" its passion flares once more.

8 Oh yes, the phantom of the one I love did come by night
And leave me sleepless; love does indeed impede delight with pain.
9 O you who fault me for chaste ʿUdhrī passion, forgive me!
For were you fair, you would not censure me.

29 I have profaned the Path of him whose night prayers brought the darkness to life
Until his feet complained of pain and swelling,
30 Who tied a stone to his belly to blunt the hunger pangs,
Concealing beneath the stone his tender flank.

31 Haughty mountains of pure gold sought to tempt him,
But, oh, with what disdain he turned them down!
36 He is the beloved of God whose intercession is hoped for
In the face of every dread and unexpected horror.

43 Don't claim what the Christians claim for their prophet,
But praise him as you judge best and proper.
45 For surely the merit of God's Messenger is without limit,
And so exceeds what any tongue could ever express.

116 Good tidings are ours, O community of Islam,
For we have a pillar of Providence that cannot be toppled;
117 When God called him who called us to obey
"The noblest of Messengers", we became the noblest of nations.

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[29] *Man yaqum laylat al-qadr īmānan wa-ḥtisāban ghufira lahu mā taqaddama min dhanbihi*. Quoted from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Damascus and Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr 2002, 19. It is, with minor variations, also included in other collections.

[30] A line space indicates the insertion of the refrain.

107 You traveled by nights from one sacred precinct, Mecca, to the other, Jerusalem,
Like the full moon traversing the pitch-dark sky.
108 Through the night you ascended until you reached a station two bows' length from God,
A station that no one else had ever attained or even dared desire.

109 To it the other Prophets and Messengers bade you precede them,
Like servants giving deference to him they serve,
110 As you, passing by them, pierced the seven levels of heaven,
In a procession of angels of which you were the standard-bearer,

34 Muḥammad, the master of all who dwell in both the seen and unseen worlds,
Of both corporeal species, men and jinn, of the two races, ʿArab and ʿAjam.
34 Muḥammad, the master of all who dwell in both the seen and unseen worlds,
Of both corporeal species, men and jinn, of the two races, ʿArab and ʿAjam.
36 He is the beloved of God whose intercession is hoped for
In the face of every dread and unexpected horror.

148 No one who hopes for his generous gifts is ever denied;
No one who seeks his protection is ever dishonored.
105 O best of those whose courtyard the supplicants seek, hastening on foot
Or on the backs of she-camels whose heavy tread leaves traces on the ground,
106 You who are the greatest sign to him who considers
And the greatest benefit to him who will seize it.

152 O most generous of all Creation, I have no one to turn to
But you, when the dreaded Day of Judgement comes.
152 O most generous of all Creation, I have no one to turn to
But you, when the dreaded Day of Judgement comes.

23 Purge with tears an eye sated with forbidden sights;
Adhere to a strict diet of repentance.
24 Disobey your willful soul and Satan, defy them!
And if they offer you advice, don't trust them!

155 O my soul, do not despair of pardon for a sin, however grave,
For mortal sins in God's forgiveness are like venial ones.
156 I hope that my share of my Lord's mercy, when He apportions it,
Will be in equal portion to my disobedience and sins.

Compared with the complete text, we find a slight thematic shift in content alignment. Although the general thematic sequence remains, the topoi of repentance, intercession, and forgiveness become condensed: they form a fugue-like stretto in the last five verses of the performance and thus make the text a perfect prayer for *laylat al-qadr*. With respect to Stetkevych's theses, we can ascertain that the structure and function of the supplicatory ode is retained and intensified through the other two features of the antiphon/refrain and the framing.

The terminology of antiphon and responsorial singing stems from the terminology of Christian liturgical singing. By using this terminology I am not alluding to any possible origin here but to the very function of this technique in religious contexts: liturgical singing, here the collective performance of rogation. In liturgical singing, the text's performance alternates between the congregation and

religious specialists, here: religious chanters. I furthermore differentiate between antiphon and refrain: the antiphon is a framing verse which is sung by everybody before and after the performed text. It may be inserted between verses, but this technique is particularly typical of alternate singing between two choruses or between chorus and congregation, whereas the use of a refrain (*responsum*), i.e. a verse which is inserted between verses or groups of verses, is characteristic of the responsorial singing between a precentor (soloist) and the congregation.[31]

The antiphon/refrain has occasionally found its way into manuscripts of the *Burda*. It is not included in early copies but features in later ones where it is graphically distinct from the rest of the poem.[32] This differentiation suggests that the verse is not considered as part of the poem's *matn* (corpus). In our case, reflecting the performance practice, it also indicates a change of performance roles, i.e. between the solo reciter and the audience. Here, we find a case in which oral practice has clearly influenced the written form.

The words of the refrain constitute a *taṣliya*, i.e. the invocation of blessings upon the prophet. The practice and wording of calling down blessings upon Muḥammad refers back to the Qur'anic verse 33:56: *inna llāha wa-malā'ikatahu yuṣallūna ʿalā l-nabī yā ayyuhā lladhīna āmanū ṣallū ʿalayhi wa-sallimū taslīmā* (God and His angels bless the Prophet. Oh believers, bless him and greet him with the full greetings of peace)[33]. Various formulas for invocation exist, the most common being "ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam". Thus, the refrain has the function of a *taṣliya*, which, again, is not surprising in the context of supplication. Scholars turned their attention to the *taṣliya* and its relation to the supplication early on, within the first centuries after Muhammad's death.[34] The main idea in these discussions was that God would not reject a petition which is combined with a eulogy. Interestingly, the postulation of including the *taṣliya* at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of a supplication[35] would conform exactly to the framing and performance practice of the present case: the refrain/*taṣliya* at the

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31 For terminology and historical background see Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, *Liturgik*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 2004, 130 ff. Of course, tracking down the relation to and possible influences of singing practices in the Oriental Church liturgies would be fascinating but is far beyond the scope of this paper.

32 Information kindly provided by Frederike-Wiebke Daub who wrote her dissertation on the layout of manuscripts at the collaborative research centre 'Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe' (SFB 950), Hamburg University ("Formen und Funktionen des Layouts in arabischen Manuskripten anhand von Abschriften religiöser Texte: al-Būṣīrīs *Burda*, al-Ǧazūlis *Dalā'il* und die *Šifā'* von Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ", PhD Dissertation, Jena University 2015).

33 All English Qur'anic citations are from *The Qur'an. A new translation by Tarif Khalidi*, London: Penguin 2009.

34 For a discussion of various scholarly positions on the quantity, place, and efficacy of the *taṣliya* with respect to supplication see Fritz Meier, "Die segenssprechung über Mohammed im bittgebet und in der bitte", in: *Bausteine. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Islamwissenschaft von Fritz Meier*, vol. 2, Erika Glassen and Gudrun Schubert, eds, Istanbul: Harrassowitz 1992, 837-875, here 839-851.

35 Meier, "segenssprechung", 840, quoting Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497).

beginning, in between the verses, and at the end. The words of the performance's second line serve as *ḥamd* (praise to God) and *taṣliya*, which is a typical introduction for religious speech. Thus, we find a careful composition which is in accordance with the occasion and function of the text: *ḥamd* and *taṣliya* at the beginning, the poem/supplication interspersed with *taṣliya*, followed by a *duʿāʾ* asking for acceptance and forgiveness, concluded with *taṣliya*.

The refrain thus has a double function: it serves a practical purpose as a means to involve the audience, and it serves a ritual purpose in its quality as *taṣliya* to ensure the supplication's efficacy. On a textual level, it turns the linear structure of the poem into a strophic structure of the prayer-performance. To sum up, all elements – the framing by an introductory verse and by *duʿāʾ*, the responsorial singing with *taṣliya*, the litany character of the melody with its narrow range, repetitions, and simplicity, and the selection of verses tailored for the occasion – sustain the poem's function as a supplication. Whereas the poem is socially framed by stories to mark its special status, the poem's performance is framed by prayer verses.

Performance context 2: miʿrāj *in 2010*

The abbreviated version by no means indicates that a complete performance of the *Burda* does not exist. Shortly before the commemoration of Muḥammad's night journey and ascension[36] in 2010, I came across a poster announcing "Majālis al-Burda" (*Burda* sessions) in a Sunni middle-class neighbourhood. The *majlis* (sing. of *majālis*) featured an *inshād* ensemble (*firqa*) and the head of Qur'an reciters in Beirut (*shaykh qurrāʾ Bayrūt*) who was offering explanations of the poem. The event was held by a mosque in the Raʾs al-Nabaʿ area and took place on a Thursday evening immediately after the sunset prayer.[37] The mosque was crowded, but not as crowded as during the *mawlid* celebration that same year, when additional rooms in the basement of the building had had to be used. Approximately three to four hundred people filled the mosque, men downstairs, the women on the gallery, and the *firqa* in the front area downstairs. The *firqa* featured at least eight men and two frame drums of about 40 cm in diameter.[38]

After the sunset prayer, a few minutes of Qur'an recitation opened the *majlis*, followed by the *fātiḥa* (first Sura of the Qur'an). The *Burda* performance was divided into three parts, interrupted once for a speech and the second time by the *adhān* for the night prayer, followed by a section of general *inshād*. A general *inshād*

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36 *Laylat al-isrāʾ wa-l-miʿrāj*. The nightly journey from Mecca to Jerusalem (as most modern interpretations have it) and the ascension to heaven are nowadays commemorated together on 27th Rajab.

37 The described *majlis* was not an exception; it was followed, for instance, by *majālis al-Burda* to welcome Ramadan a few months later in the same year.

38 Sometimes it was difficult to catch sight of the whole *firqa*, and the number of chorus singers occasionally differed. The mentioned *firqa* often performed at religious celebrations, but was different from the one performing on *laylat al-qadr* in 2009.

section was also added after the end of the *Burda* before the night prayer was performed.[39] Clearly, the participants were expected to sing along. For this purpose, small booklets containing the text of the *Burda* were distributed. Here, the text was divided into the aforementioned ten parts. As in *laylat al-qadr* in 2009, the *Burda* started with the antiphon which was subsequently implemented as a refrain. The performance began with the same melody as the 2009 performance on *laylat al-qadr* but continued by switching between five different melodies. Melodic change often occurred with the beginning of a new section or a new thematic aspect. The melody of the refrain changed according to the melody of the verses.

The verses were sung by the *firqa* or a soloist of the *firqa*, the refrain by everybody (though sometimes only by the *firqa*, especially when they used a less well-known melody). Occasionally the soloist or even the chorus fell silent so that the participants could hear themselves better, a common technique that encourages the involvement of the audience. All melodies were rhythmic, syllabic, relatively simple, and fast. The melodies predominantly moved in smalls steps, and the melodic range was that of a fourth or fifth. The refrain was inserted between every verse; with the exception of after verse 119 when the refrain was repeated only between two sections. Thus, the litany character of this performance was stronger, mainly due to its duration and tempo.

However, several techniques were occasionally employed to maintain the awareness of the attendees:

- the first hemistich started on the fifth instead of the tonic
- at the start of the refrain, the word "mawlāya! (o my Lord)" was shouted
- members of the *firqa* shouted "sawā! (all together!)" to encourage singing
- the pace quickened
- people were invited to call down blessings upon the prophet by shouting "ṣalli ʿalayh!" at the end of a line.

At the end, a *duʿāʾ* (prayer) of seven verses was added. This *duʿāʾ* – or parts of it – is often added to *Burda* performances. Of the print editions I consulted, only al-Bājūrī has included these verses, introduced with just a terse comment: "Some of the copies feature verses that nobody in the commentaries has mentioned, but it is not a mistake to give them here: [verses follow]".[40] From this remark, we learn that the verses are well known and in use, but not considered part of the poem's *matn* (corpus). As they are not mentioned in any secondary literature, I include them here:

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39 The *inshād* featured praise for God and Muḥammad and some special songs on the occasion of *miʿrāj*.

40 al-Bājūrī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 70. According to Ḥasanayn, the very common print edition of *al-Maktaba al-maḥmūdiya al-tijāriyya bi-l-Azhar* includes these seven verses as well. See Aḥmad Ṭāhir Ḥasanayn, "Iṭlāla ʿalā 'Burdat' al-Būṣirī wa-tarāsulātihā", *Alif: Journal of Comparative Literature* 23 (2003), 96-117, here 96, 115, n. 5. This might be influenced by the fact that al-Bājūrī was Shaykh al-Azhar between 1847 and 1860.

Thumma l-riḍā ʿan Abī Bakrin wa-ʿan ʿUmarin / wa-ʿan ʿAliyyin wa-ʿan ʿUthmāna dhī l-karami
Wa-l-āli wa-l-ṣaḥbi thumma l-tābiʿīna fa-hum / ahlu l-tuqā wa-l-naqā wa-l-ḥilmi wa-l-karami
Yā rabbi bi-l-muṣṭafā balligh maqāṣidanā / wa-ghfir lanā mā maḍā yā wāsiʿa l-karami
Wa-ghfir ilāhī li-kulli l-muslimīna bi-mā / yatlūna fi l-masjidi l-aqṣā wa-fi l-ḥarami
Bi-jāhi man baytuhu fi Ṭībatin ḥaramun / wa-ismuhū[41] *qasamun min aʿẓami l-qasami*
Wa-hādhihi Burdatu l-mukhtāri qad khutimat / wa-l-ḥamdu li-llāhi fi badʾin wa-fi khatami
Abyātuhā qad atat sittīna maʿ miʾatin / farrij bihā karbanā yā wāsiʿa l-karami

And be pleased with Abū Bakr and ʿUmar / and with ʿAlī and ʿUthmān the noble one
And with the family of the prophet and his companions and their successors / for they are people of piety and purity, forbearance and generosity.
O Lord, for the love of the chosen one grant us the fulfilment of our goals / and forgive us for what has passed, o most generous one.
And forgive, my God, all Muslims who / recite in the Furthest Mosque and in the Sacred Precinct
For the glory of whose house is in Ṭība[42] / whose name is the paramount oath.
Here, the *Burda* of the chosen one has finished / praise be to God in the beginning and the end.
Its verses are one hundred and sixty / ease with it our sorrows, o most generous one.

In the performance under discussion here, the last verse was repeated twice, the second time with the phrase "heal with it our ill ones" instead of "ease with it our sorrows". The performance concluded with the refrain. The sole performance of the *Burda* that evening, including the seven prayer verses, lasted 45 minutes.

The whole setting – the distributed booklets, the responsorial singing, the *duʿāʾ* – shows that this gathering was meant to be a prayer gathering and not a religious concert where one goes to listen only. Also, the poster clearly invited attendees to *participate* in the *majlis* ("li-l-mushāraka").[43] This is further supported by the performance mode: the simple melodies with syllabic singing which enables almost everybody to join in, the double-function of the refrain which serves as a benediction for the prophet as well as a participation strategy, and the interaction between members of the *firqa* and the attendees. The performance practice, the framing by the *taṣliya* at the beginning and end, and the added *duʿāʾ* show that the poem's performance is meant to be a ritual act.[44] It is meant to provide spiritual healing by a

41 The *hamza* is pronounced due to the syllable allocation of the melody.

42 Ṭība [in other cases pronounced Ṭayba] as a name for Medina appears in many praise poems/songs for Muḥammad.

43 This does not necessarily mean that everybody in fact participated with the same vigour.

44 I use a very general definition of ritual here which encompasses a sequence of action which can be repeated, is executed with an intention, and aims at transformation. This definition is very close to the one Alexander gives, although it lacks in our case the notion of spontaneity (which is present in other articles of the volume, cf. the contribution by Farra-Haddad) and furthermore features an acquired form of authorization: "Ritual defined in the most general and basic terms is a performance, planned or improvised, that effects a transition from everyday life to an alternative context within which the everyday is transformed." (Bobby C. Alexander, "Ritual and Current Studies of Ritual: Overview", in: *Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook*, Stephen D. Glazier, ed., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1997, 139-160, here 139).

re-enactment of its transformative progression of admit-repent-praise-supplicate. In a more literal understanding, its recitation expresses the hope or confidence that the poem, or its recitation, will bring physical strength and health as it has done to so many people before, starting with the poet himself. Here, the very act of reciting constitutes the ritual efficacy independently of the participants' grasp of the full semantic meaning of the verses.

Performance context 3: miʿrāj *in 2011*

The third performance took place during the actual celebration to commemorate the prophet's night journey and ascension in 2011. The celebration started on a Saturday evening a few days before 27th Rajab after the sunset prayer and was held in the ʿAssāf Mosque in Downtown Beirut. Here, the *Burda* verses were part of a roughly one and a half hour *inshād* which was interjected by a speech by the mosque's imam. This time, the same *firqa* as during the complete *Burda* in 2010 performed. Of the poem, only two verses were chosen. These represent the core of the poem's section on the night journey and ascension. Moreover, verses 107 and 108 connect the sparse references to the prophet's night journey and ascension that are found in the Qur'an.

107 *Sarayta min ḥaramin laylan ilā ḥaramin*
kamā sarā l-badru fi dāǧin mina l-ẓulami
108 *Wa-bitta tarqā ilā an nilta manzilatan*
min qābi qawsayni lam tudrak wa-lam turami

107 You travelled by night from one sacred precinct, Mecca, to the other, Jerusalem
Like the full moon traversing the pitch-dark sky
108 Through the night you ascended until you reached a station two bows' length from God
A station that no one else had ever attained or even dared desire.

Verse 107 evokes Qur'an 17:1[45], whereas verse 108 refers to Qur'an 53:7-10.[46] al-Būṣirī follows the occurrences as they are described in popular interpretations and narratives by using "tarqā (you ascend)".[47] And this is the very aspect which governs the performance of these verses.

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45 *Subḥāna lladhī asrā bi-ʿabdihi laylan mina l-masjidi l-ḥarāmi ilā l-masjidi l-aqṣā lladhī bāraknā ḥawlahu li-nuriyahu min āyātinā*. Engl.: Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Furthest Mosque, whose precincts We have blessed, to show him Our wonders!

46 *Wa-huwa bi-l-ufuqi l-aʿlā / thumma danā fa-tadallā / fa-kāna qāba qawsayni aw adnā / fa-awḥā ilā ʿabdihi mā awḥā*. Engl.: He took his stand, being on the upper horizon, / Then drew near and hung suspended, / And was two bows' length, or nearer. / And He revealed to His servant what He revealed.

47 For alternative interpretations of 53:7-10 see Josef van Ess, "Vision and Ascension: *Sūrat al-Najm* and its Relationship with Muḥammad's *miʿrāj*", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1 (1999), 47-62, esp. 50-57.

The musical rendition is quite distinct from the renditions presented before. It is performed by a soloist, it is metrically free, marked by repetitions of single passages, and it contains long melismatic passages (i.e. one syllable is performed on many musical notes). In the beginning, there is not much melodic movement; the melodic line is mildly arch-shaped, with two moderate elevations on the words "ḥaramin". The rendition of the second hemistich is more lively, but still light. Eventually, the movement of the protagonist described in verse 108 is imitated quite dramatically by the melodic line. The melodic line is characterized by a gradual ascension in sequences, which is emphasized by several repetitions of the word "tarqā". In the last repetition, the singer holds the last syllable for twelve seconds, moving also to a higher register – which provokes fierce responses from his audience. The rest of the verse is rendered in a slightly descending melos, with the pitch at the end of the verse still higher than at the end of verse 107. The short rest on "manzilatan" (station) is noteworthy. The complete verse is repeated with several internal repetitions and finally repeated a third time. The complete rendition takes three minutes. A transcription of the text may give at least a visual impression of how these verses are performed, as it shows the repetitions and stretching of syllables. It also includes the audience responses.

Sarayta min ḥaramin laylan ilā_ ḥaramin	ah_____
kamā sarā l-badru fi_ dājin mina l-ẓulami	
Sarayta min ḥaramin_ / laylan ilā__ ḥaramin	ṣalli ʿalayh!
kamā sarā l_-badru fi dā__jin____ mina l-ẓ_ulami	ah
Wa-bitta tarqā__ / tarqā___	
bitta tarqā tarqā tarqā tarqā_____	various exclamations
ilā__ an nilta manzilatan	
min qābi qawsayni lam tudrak wa-lam turami	ah_____
Wa-bitta tarqā_____	ah_
Wa-bitta tarqā ilā an nilta manzilatan a_____h bitta tarqā	ah! ṣalli ʿalayh!
bitta tarqā ilā an nilta manzilatan__	
min qābi qawsayni lam tudrak wa-lam / turami_____ yā rasūla llāh	ah__
a_____h	
Wa-bitta tarqā_____ ilā an nilta manzilatan	
min qābi qawsayn / lam tudrak wa-lam__ turami	

Figure 3: Verses 107 and 108 as rendered by the soloist.
/ indicates a short pause; ___ indicate how long a syllable is held.

Regarding the audience responses, we have to distinguish, on the one hand, between affirmative exclamations of "ah" or the call to invoke blessings upon the prophet which show the emotional involvement of the audience members and their enthusiasm about the performance and the artistic skills of the performer. On the other hand, we find a longer syllable of "ah__" at the same pitch at which the melodic phrase ends which is usually performed by one or more members of the *firqa* and functions as a tonal support for the soloist.

The performance is further characterized by careful articulation of the words (*lafẓ*), the resting of the voice on the geminate consonant, and the selective employment of nasal vocal quality (*ghunna*). This voice quality evokes a religious context in many Arab listeners, as it is not only a voice ideal associated with an older musical repertory (prior to World War I) but also an obligatory device demanded at specific points of Qur'anic recitation. This is the case here, for instance, with the letters n and m which by assimilation become geminate m (line 4 of the transcription). Nasality was a highly regarded vocal quality in non-religious performances as well, until it gradually faded out after World War I due to aesthetic changes in the wake of European influence.[48] In modern *qaṣīda* performances, *ghunna* is occasionally employed to provide religious or emotionally intense colouring (*lawn*). In our context, the performer brings his rendition not only close to Qur'anic recitation by applying certain rules of *tajwīd* (here: orthoepy) but also fulfils the listeners' expectations.

Indeed, this performance may be termed a *qaṣīda*-style performance, as it features the main characteristics of a *qaṣīda* performance. We find the artistic endeavour of "painting" the meaning of the words through vocal rendition (arab. *taṣwīr al-maʿnā*), especially in the second verse: the ascension, that is the movement from low to high, is reproduced by a gradual movement from a lower to higher register of the voice.[49] As Josef van Ess points out, the prophet's movement in the night journey (Sura 17:1) was horizontal: "He remained on the surface of the earth; he had moved horizontally, not vertically".[50] The vertical movement is generally ascribed to the verses in Sura 53. The *Burda* verses link both movements, as does the melodic line of the soloist.

Another important element of the *qaṣīda* performance is the involvement of the listeners who respond to the musical process with exclamations, sighs, and comments. The Arabic term for this social and acoustic interaction is *tafāʿul*. This phenomenon is not only part of listeners' *ādāb* (here: codes of behaviour) in Arab

48 Ali Jihad Racy, *Musical Change and Commercial Recording in Egypt 1904-1932*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois 1977, 290.

49 In modern music history, the Egyptian composer Sayyid Darwīsh (1892-1923) is credited with having introduced this technique of imitating a spatial movement with the melodic line into Arab music; see Yaḥyā al-Laythī, "Mūsiqā Sayyid Darwīsh bayn al-taʿbīr wa-l-taṣwīr", in: *Sayyid Darwīsh. Ḥayāt wa-nagham*, Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḥammād, ed., Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li-l-kitāb 1970, 64-74.

50 van Ess, "Vision and Ascension", 48.

secular musical culture but also of the *ādāb* towards Qur'anic recitation.[51] *tafāʿul* denotes both the emotional involvement of the listener and encouragement for the performer, as it is already indicated by the morphological structure of the term which signifies a reciprocal relation. Interviews and field observations have shown that the audience response forms not only an integral part of the performance but is regarded as highly positive and even necessary by the performer.

Finally, the soloist employs various techniques of textual stretching which are typical of *qaṣīda* performances. The metrically free rendition allows the performer to take great liberties in the rendition of the text by breaking the lines up into several parts: through the repetition of single passages or words, the insertion of pauses, the interpolation of exclamations (here: "yā rasūla llāh"), or the musical elaboration of single syllables, which triggers responses from the listeners. Naturally, performing in the *qaṣīda* style is more time consuming. The performer needs three minutes for the two verses – three minutes of performance in the litany style would allow him to perform about twenty verses of the poem within the same amount of time.

The public character of the *qaṣīda*-style performance indicates a different function from the litany style. Here, the rendition aims at the poetry, not the prayer. The careful delivery with the utmost artistically expressive repertoire and ability is the main concern. Yet, it is not the only concern. The text is not secondary but rather serves a religious function: *madiḥ* (praise). Of course, the choice of the two verses is governed by the occasion of the celebration. From a more general perspective, however, the night journey and ascension is regarded as one of the prophet's miracles (*muʿjiza*), by which the prophet has confounded his opponents. Night journey and ascension constitute a distinction only granted to Muḥammad. The respective verses thus speak of the superior status of the prophet and his mission. This praise is uttered in a form which aims at preparing the listeners for the experience of that greatness and at generating veneration and love for the prophet.

Excursus: the Burda*'s antiphon*

Before summarizing the presented performances I would like to draw upon the technique of including an antiphon/refrain. This technique, which is central to most of the poem's performances, is hardly mentioned in any of the written material about the *Burda*.

The origin and timing of the antiphon/refrain are not quite clear. What is clear is the fact that the *Burda* was performed and listened to repeatedly very early on,

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[51] For *ādāb* in the context of Arab music see Ali Jihad Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World. The Culture and Artistry of* Ṭarab, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, esp. 37 f.; for the context of Qur'anic recitation see Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an* [Austin 1985], Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press 2001, 57 ff.

starting with the aforementioned Bahāʾ al-Dīn and his family. There are even indications that the *Burda* was performed by specialists, a group of professional reciters called *qurrāʾ al-burda* (reciters of the *Burda*)[52]. And there is a second version of al-Būṣīrī's dream which is reported by Mubārak and Kīlānī. This version has a further episode added, including a dialogue between the poet and the prophet. Mubārak introduces his rendition of the second version with "And the dream of al-Būṣīrī has (produced) phantasms in the minds of the Sufis." He continues:

> They liked one to recite after every verse*: Mawlāya ṣalli wa-sallim dāʾiman abadan / ʿalā ḥabībika khayri l-khalqi kullihimi*. […] They said (qālū): The underlying reason to choose this verse and not another one is that he, may God have mercy upon him [i.e. al-Būṣīrī], when he composed this poem, he saw the prophet in a dream: [al-Būṣīrī] recited the poem in front of him, and [the prophet] swayed out of delight like a bough. When he finished saying "Fa-mablaghu l-ʿilmi fihi annahu basharun" [the first hemistich of v. 51], he could not complete the verse. [The prophet] pbuh said: "Recite!"[53], and [al-Būṣīrī] answered: "I can't execute the second hemistich, oh messenger of God." The messenger told him: "Say 'wa-annahu khayru khalqi llāhi kullihimi'", and al-Būṣīrī inserted this hemistich […] into the preceding verse [51]. And he made it a prayer (*ṣalāt*) to be repeated after every verse, out of consideration for the prophet's pu words.[54]

The version of the dream including the refrain is not found in the early accounts of the composition of the *Burda*: neither al-Ṣafadī nor al-Kutubī nor al-Maqrīzī mention the episode. Therefore, it is safe to assume we are dealing with a later addition. If it did stem from an earlier period, there is no reason why these authors would not have mentioned it in the same way as the other stories they related. A systematic evaluation of the commentaries is beyond the scope of this article. The earliest hint of a special position of verse 51 I found in the commentary by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1567) who remarks with reference to the 14th-century scholar al-Zarkashī: "This verse is, as al-Zarkashī said, one of the best and most praiseful (amdaḥ) verses of the poem."[55] The commentaries by al-Azharī, al-Ghazzī, and al-Bājūrī make no reference to the refrain.[56] The German translations from the 19th century (see footnote 7) used early commentaries, but do not refer to any refrain.

Besides his criticism of the inventions with respect to the *Burda*, Kīlānī offers an explanation: the hemistich stems from one of al-Ṣarṣarī's (d. 1258) poems, he

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52 Kīlānī, "Muqaddima", 30, without mentioning a source.

53 Arab. "iqraʾ", this has almost Qurʾanic connotations (cf. Sura 96:1); Kīlānī has the less loaded "qul!".

54 Mubārak, *al-Madāʾiḥ*, 149 f.; Kīlānī reports a shorter version ("Muqaddima", 28). Both authors view the stories in an extremely negative way, labelling all of them "Sufi inventions". Unfortunately, neither of them give a detailed source for the refrain dream.

55 Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *al-ʿUmda fī sharḥ al-Burda*, ed. Bassām Muḥammad Bārūd, Dubai: Dār al-fāqih and Amman: Dār al-fatḥ 2003, 286. Abū ʿAbdallāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Zarkashī (1344-1392) was a scholar of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*.

56 al-Azharī, *Sharḥ*; al-Ghazzī, *al-Zubda*; al-Bājūrī, *Mukhtaṣar*; al-Bājūrī, *Hāshiyat al-Burda*, Cairo 1855.

suggests: *Muḥammadun khayru khalqi llāhi kullihimi / wa-huwa lladhī li-fakhāri l-majdi yantasibu*.[57] Various similar expressions, as in the first hemistich quoted by Kīlānī, can also be found in other praise poems for Muḥammad, including the *Qaṣīda al-muḥammadiyya* by al-Būṣīrī.[58] This may provide a possible origin of the words, but it does not explain why the refrain was introduced and why its introduction was so successful.

The answer to this question may be better approached if we take the recitation practice into consideration. If we take the label of "Sufi" in Mubārak and Kīlānī as an allusion to a broader historical period, we can try to contextualize this practice within other religious developments during that period. In the 13th century, Sufism started to feature more prominently as a religious, social, and political force. At the same time, the commemoration of the prophet's birthday became a widely followed practice. In this context, a genre of narratives emerged about the life and birth of Muḥammad which was predominantly meant to be recited publically. Some of these narratives feature the invocation of blessings upon Muḥammad which are inserted into the text, often at the end of a section. It is safe to assume that these are not merely employed as a means of dividing the text into sections or as an embellishment but are meant to be recited collectively, to be performed as a prayer between sections. Marion Katz defines the *taṣliya* formulas as "a participatory element of *mawlid* performance"[59]. Although no instructions for the recitation are included in the texts and the *taṣliya* may very well only be included later in the related manuscripts and printings, it appears obvious that its inclusion reflects the reading practice. In a contemporary collection of *mawlid* texts from the 13th to the 20th century, almost every text features *taṣliya* formulas; further, more recent texts in this collection have quite detailed instructions for recitation roles.[60]

Taṣliya was already a feature of an early repertory of pious utterances. However, it gained more public notability – or acoustic publicity – towards the end of the 14th century when it became common practice for muezzins to add eulogies after the call to prayer.[61] Furthermore, various forms of *taṣliya* became central to Sufi

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57 Kīlānī, "Muqaddima", 28.

58 al-Būṣīrī, *Dīwān*, 224 f. and numerous editions and booklets for practical use. al-Būṣīrī's *Muḍariyya* (*Dīwān*, 226 f.) contains verses very similar to the seven added. Due to the congruent number and quality of syllables, all three poems can be (and sometimes are) performed to the same tune.

59 Marion Holmes Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muḥammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam*, London and New York: Routledge 2007, 81.

60 Nawāl Abū l-Fatḥ, *al-Mutāḥ min al-mawālid wa-l-anāshīd al-milāḥ*, 2 vols, [Damascus]: Dār al-Shādī 1995. The use of certain verses as antiphon/refrain is a widespread performance technique of *inshād* today. The verses may be combined with different poems.

61 Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzi, *Kitāb al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*, vol. 2, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir n.d. (offset printing), 272; Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭi, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍira fi tārikh Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, vol. 2, Cairo: Dār iḥyāʾ al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya 1387/1968, 306.

congregations, culminating in the emergence of weekly meetings especially devoted to the recitation of benedictions for the prophet in the first half of the 16th century. Such developments were fostered by prayer books like the immensely popular *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* (Directives to Good Deeds) of al-Jazūli (d. 1465).[62] The *taṣliya*'s popularity and attractiveness was further nourished by the notion that its very recitation was a religiously meritorious act and would bestow blessing upon the reciter. The idea of receiving rewards for the invocation of blessings upon the prophet is illustrated by various sayings by the prophet. Two sayings, both quoted in the popular compilation *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn* (The Gardens of the Righteous) by the 13th-century scholar al-Nawawī, are particularly significant: "Whoever invokes a blessing upon me will be blessed by God ten times" and "Those people will be nearest to me on the day of resurrection who have invoked the most blessings upon me".[63] In this light, the *taṣliya* of the *Burda* performances even gains a triple function: it enables participation, it ensures its efficacy, and it constitutes in itself a reward-winning act.

The *taṣliya* refrain seems to be a later addition, derived from new forms of piety and the recitation practices connected to these. It subsequently became legitimized by a dream account in parallel with the early stories related to the *Burda*. Several reasons suggest the thesis of a later addition, probably during the 15th century: the fact that the refrain dream is not included in early accounts about the composition and healing effect of the *Burda*; a growing veneration for the prophet from the 13th century onwards which is manifested in *mawlid* commemorations and public eulogies after the *adhān*; and the *taṣliya* as powerful tool, developed and practiced especially but not exclusively in Sufi piety. This assumption is backed by the findings of Frederike-Wiebke Daub who found that the refrain was only included in later copies of the *Burda* (see footnote 32).

Conclusion

Three different performance contexts and manifestations of the *Burda* have been presented: the first one featured the *Burda* as a supplication during *laylat al-qadr*, framed by *duʿā'* and *ṣalāt al-tahajjud*. Only excerpts were performed, but the structure of the supplicatory ode remained and had been tailored for the occasion. The *Burda*'s verses were framed by *ḥamd* and *taṣliya* and a concluding *duʿā'*. Only one melody was employed, the singing alternated between the *firqa* (verses) and the at-

62 See Ignaz Goldziher, "Über den Brauch der Maḥjâ-Versammlungen im Islam" [1901], in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Joseph Desomogzi, ed., vol. 4, Hildesheim: Georg Olms 1970, 277-294.

63 Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*, n.p.: Dār al-zayn li-l-turāth 1987, 375. The first saying is frequently mentioned in the context of *mawlid* editions (Katz, *Birth of the Prophet*, 79 f.), the second one was often quoted on invitation posters for commemorative celebrations or prayer circles which I saw during my fieldwork.

tendees (refrain). The second context was a *majlis* (session) for a complete *Burda* performance, which also alternated between the *firqa* and the attendees, but using five different melodies. Here, the ritual character dominated, not least due to the concluding *duʿā'* which asked for (spiritual) healing through its recitation. This meeting was conducted independently of any religious holiday. The third performance consisted of only two verses from the *Burda*, chosen for the commemoration of the prophet's night journey and ascension and serving as *madīḥ* (praise for the prophet). The metrically free solo rendition did not include any refrain/*taṣliya*.

Judging by the musical form, we can identify two different modes of rendition: the first mode is what I have termed the litany style, the second is the *qaṣīda* style (see figure 4). The litany style is characterized by syllabic and rhythmic singing and a moderate to fast tempo. The melodic line moves in small steps, including repetitions of tones and embracing only a narrow range (forth to fifth). The litany style is used for collective singing, in a responsorial technique between the congregation and the *firqa* or soloist, and includes the antiphon/refrain. The *qaṣīda* style features melismatic singing and a wide melodic range. It is performed by a soloist and is metrically free. The tempo is rather slow and features several short pauses and prolonged tones. Techniques of textual stretching and musical painting are employed, and a relationship is built up between the solo performer and the audience which results in mutual involvement and encouragement. No antiphon/refrain is used.

	litany style	***qaṣīda* style**
singing style	syllabic	melismatic
melody	moves in small steps, repetition of tones, narrow range	more melodic movement, prolonged tones, wide range
rhythm	rhythmic	metrically free
tempo	moderate to fast	slow
performers	*firqa*/soloist and everybody, responsorial	soloist
antiphon/refrain	with refrain	no refrain
special techniques	encouragement to sing along	textual stretching, musical painting, establishing *tafāʿul*

Figure 4: General characteristics of litany-style and *qaṣīda*-style renditions.

The litany style conveys both supplication and ritual whereas the *qaṣīda* style is employed when the poem serves as *madīḥ*. The musical features of both styles correspond to features of the two major styles of Qur'anic recitation, *murattal* and *mujawwad*. *Murattal* denotes the plainer style which is speech bound, mostly syllabic,

and rarely crosses the range of a fourth or fifth. *Mujawwad* denotes the artistically elaborate style which employs melisma, an extremely wide range, and a variety of musical devices like *maqām* principles[64], ornamentation, and various voice registers. Moreover, the styles correspond also in function. *Murattal* is used for educational purposes, for private recitation, and in ritual. *Mujawwad* is used for public recitation; its main purpose is to elaborate on the meaning of the words and in doing so to "produce an emotional and religious effect on listeners".[65]

Today, we encounter al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* in various manifestations and with different functions and, thus, as a versatile text. One of the most striking differences between the printed poem and the poem in performance lies in the refrain which has been connected to practices of piety towards the prophet Muḥammad that emerged from the 13th century onwards. The refrain is generally added when the *Burda* is collectively performed; it indicates the primary dividing line between the poem as general *madīḥ* and supplication. The *Burda's* function as a supplication does not require the entire poem. It is not the text, but the performance mode which primarily defines its function.

64 Rules and melodic elements which are bound to the modal system of Arab music.
65 Nelson, *The Art of Reciting*, 102; see also 102-116 for both styles.

A "Deserted Site of Display": Performing the Crafts' *risāla* in Pre-socialist Central Asia[1]

Jeanine Elif Dağyeli

> The exuberant presence of performance masks an intrinsic absence. Necessarily temporal and temporary, performances are always in a state of appearing and vanishing; by definition transient, they are immediate yet quickly become historical. Performances of the distant past, however, those precluding personal or collective memory, raise with particular urgency the issue of absence. When the historian, archival inscriptions in hand, revisits the deserted site of display, the vivid presence of performance is long gone. It is then that memory passes through theory by virtue of cultural necessity and the historian's interpretation becomes the prosthesis of an imaginary performative practice …[2]

Rituals are often held to be master-keys to understanding cultures, conceptions of the Self and the Other, as well as individual and collective identities.[3] Although this notion has not gone undisputed within the scholarly community,[4] rituals are still widely understood as embodied religious (or other) experience. Especially the recent focus on performance as foundational element of religion places emphasis on a "dynamic, lived, and fluidly embodied set of actions, practices, gestures and speech acts at specific points in time and space".[5] Irrespective of whether the enactment of ritual in a certain context is delegated to specialists or open to anybody, those put in charge require ritual competence combined with performative skills. Enacted ritual is, as the introductory quotation by Mark Franko and Annette Richards indicates, a highly volatile research subject that quickly shifts from present to past. Rituals generally are characterized by a "movement between past acts, texts, and their present-day interpreters"[6] who engage in constant reformulations and re-

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1 The title alludes to the introductory quotation by Franko and Richards given below.

2 Mark Franko and Annette Richards, eds, *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines*, Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press 2000, 1.

3 Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Strausberg, eds, *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, Leiden et al.: Brill 2006, xv.

4 Cf. Jack Goody, "'Against Ritual': Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic", in: *Secular Ritual*, Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, eds, Amsterdam: Van Gorcum 1977, 25-35, here 32; Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, New York et al.: Oxford University Press 1992, 7.

5 Claire Maria Chambers, Simon W. du Toit, and Joshua Edelman, "Introduction", in: *Performing Religion in Public*, Claire Maria Chambers, Simon W. du Toit, and Joshua Edelman, eds, Hampshire et al.: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, 1-24, here 2; see also Julian Millie, *Splashed by the Saint. Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, Leiden: KITLV Press 2009.

6 Franko and Richards, *Acting*, 1.

interpretations. If we move on to historical ritual performance predating the onset of individual or collective memory, however, there is not even a present-day interpreter at hand to offer interpretations of the respective ritual practice. We are left with sometimes scarce and biased descriptions of these past performances and we are well reminded that the reconstruction of past performances might indeed result in the construction of an "imaginary performative practice".[7]

While keeping these cautious remarks in mind, I will nevertheless explore the past enactment of popular religious thought in a particular setting – that of sedentary, mostly urban, craftsmen of 19th- and early 20th-century pre-Socialist Central Asia. I will concentrate on the performative faculties of a text specific to the crafts milieu of that time: the Central Asian crafts' *risāla* (*risāla-yi kasb* in Persian, *kasb risālasi*/*risālesi* in the Turkic languages of the region). This little studied genre had been widespread in the sedentary communities of Central Asia (i.e. Afghanistan, West- and East-Turkestan) prior to the arrival of socialism.[8]

The Central Asian crafts' *risāla* can be called a moral code of conduct with claims to scriptural authority for people engaged in crafts production. The texts treat questions of proper work-related conduct, morality, religiously legitimate profit and the transmission of basic Islamic concepts. They relate the respective craft's divine initiation story, provide information about the patron saint (*pīr*) of the profession and instructions for the moral conduct of craftsmen; they include eschatological scenes as well as the appropriate prayers that should accompany various stages in the production process. The *risāla* served as a milieu-specific textual means to disseminate central religious and moral values and to transform them into ritual practice embedded and expressed in the craftsmen's habitus. Copied frequently, each copyist and each performer could model the text on his audience, which explains the wide variety of motives and plot lines encountered even within *risāla* texts on one craft. These books – small enough to fit into a pocket – were meant to be kept at the workshop or to be carried around by the craftsmen, and served as guidebooks in matters of moral and religious importance, and as amulets at the same time. Today, little is left of the meaningfulness which the *risāla* formerly yielded for craftsmen, and occasions for its enactment are probably scarce.[9]

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7 Franko and Richards, *Acting*, 1.

8 On the *risāla*, see Mikhail Gavrilov, *Risolja sartovskikh remeslennikov. Izledovanie predanij musulmanskikh cekhov*, Tashkent 1912; Mikhail Gavrilov "Les corps de métiers en Asie centrale et leurs statuts (rissala)", *Revue des Études Islamiques* 2 (1928), 209-230; Micheline Centlivres-Demont, "Un corpus de *risāla* du Turkestan afghan", in: *Madrasa. Le transmission du savoir dans le monde musulman*, Nicole Grandin and Marc Gaborieau, eds, Paris: Éditions Arguments 1997, 84-9; Jeanine Elif Dağyeli, *Gott liebt das Handwerk. Moral, Identität und religiöse Legitimierung in der mittelasiatischen Handwerks-risāla*, Wiesbaden: Reichert 2011, as well as their bibliographies.

9 In former Soviet Central Asia, performance of the *risāla* seems to have ended in the late 1930s with anti-religious campaigns and a complete restructuring of the labour sphere. In

The question of how old the genre *risāla* is has troubled scholars for more than a century now. Most of the texts that have come down to us date from the 19th to early 20th centuries, but many manuscripts are not dated at all. The oldest dated manuscript is known as *anīs al-sālikin* (intimate friend of the paths)[10] and stems from 1697 but, strictly speaking, this is not a *risāla* because it refers to ethics and regulations of craft production in general, not to those of an individual profession. Nevertheless, it shares many features with the *risāla*.[11] Although I do not agree with Russian colonial and Soviet scholars who mostly ascribe to the *risāla* a very long history, possibly with roots in antiquity, the genre certainly developed earlier than the 19th century.[12] Like other popular texts, the *risāla* was a link between the text-based discourses of the madrasa and scholars on the one hand, and ordinary people on the other.[13] Sufis of various denominations might have been heavily involved in the knowledge and text transfer as the *risāla* is imbued with Sufic terminology and conceptualizations. By means of these popular books that made – as is the case with the *risāla* – reference to the life-world of their addressees, knowledge of Islam and its interpretations was disseminated among the populace.

The *risāla* developed in a literary milieu that was characterized by the concomitance of speech and writing. Scholars are divided on whether oral crafts-specific traditions preceded the written *risāla* or not. Paul Zumthor relegates the assumption that orality necessarily preceded written texts to the realm of romantic and positivist European thinking with little equivalent in actual literary processes.[14] Nuryoghdi Toshev, on the other hand, has noted that the 18th century saw a rise in writing down previously orally transmitted popular texts in Central Asia and assumes that the *risāla* had been among those.[15]

Afghanistan and Xinjiang, performances might still exist on a smaller, private scale but this is hard to substantiate because of diverse obstacles for researchers in both regions.

10 MS IVRUz-1 10723, 1v-36r. Cf. Jürgen Paul, ed., *Katalog sufischer Handschriften aus der Bibliothek des Instituts für Orientalistik der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Republik Usbekistan*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2002, seq. no. 154.

11 Other earlier popular books also show similarities with the *risāla* in content and style, e.g. Kay Kaʻūsʻ Mirror of Princes Qābusnāma (1082/83) or Ḥusayn Wāʻiẓ Kāshifīʻs Futuwwatnāma-yi sulṭānī from the 15th century, cf. Dağyeli, *Handwerk*, 13, 50.

12 Dağyeli, *Handwerk*, 12f.

13 Nazif Shahrani, "Local knowledge of Islam and social discourse in Afghanistan and Turkistan in the modern period", in: *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective*, Robert L. Canfield, ed., Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press 1991, 161-188, here 164.

14 Paul Zumthor, *Einführung in die mündliche Dichtung*, Berlin: Akademieverlag 1990, 54.

15 Nuryoghdi Toshev, "Znachenie fonda rukopisej insituta vostokovedenija akademii nauk respubliki Uzbekistan dlja issledovanija voprosov islamskoj civilizacii", in: *Oʻzbekistonning islom civilizatsiyasi rivojiga qoʻshgan hissasi*, Tashkent et al. 2007, 318-321, here 320 f.

Text-based performance in Central Asian Islam

If it was once the primary object of performance theory to privilege the oral over the written text, scholarly attention since the 1980s has shifted more towards "overhauling the traditional delineations between texts and performances" altogether, and has turned towards their interactive, hybrid and constantly re-evolving manifestations.[16] Scripture and text-based religious performance play a major role in Central Asian lived Islam. Religious ceremonies often imply the recitation of a sacred text which the reciter knows by heart, although he or she nevertheless displays the written text (in Arabic script)[17] to the audience. The written text guarantees the allegedly scriptural origins of the recitation and legitimizes the role of the reciter – who is the one able to read the otherwise indecipherable script – as a mediator between the text and the audience.

In spite of a series of studies dedicated at least partly to text-based performative aspects of Central Asian Islam in post-independence years,[18] popular religiosity and religious performance in Central Asia remains an understudied field, even more so from a historical perspective. This desideratum is less a result of disinterest than a consequence of sometimes difficult access to material. During Soviet times, research on "religious relicts" (*perezhitki*) and "superstitions" was mainly conducted along evolutionist lines to gain insight into religious developments in the past. Questions of performance and performativity were of little interest, however, especially as it was politically undesirable to present these rituals as lived practice. Rigid separation of disciplines, e.g. of literary studies, anthropology and orientalist studies, further hampered access to performative events based on texts in the interstices of written and oral literature. Treated as vestiges of the past, *perezhitki* were stripped of their Islamic aspects and – neglecting similar phenomena in other Islamicate countries – treated as mere local folklore or as pre-Islamic cultural remnants gone underground in the face of the dominant Islamic religion.

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16 Cf. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, eds, *Critical Theory and Performance*, revised and enlarged edition, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 2007, 3 and xii.

17 Since the post-Soviet Central Asian languages are written in Cyrillic or Latin alphabets today, the use of Arabic script is restricted to the religious sphere. Here, Arabic script is a powerful, prestige-earning symbol of Muslimness, a signifier that far exceeds the conveyed message (cf. Sigrid Kleinmichel, *Ḫalpa in Chorezm (Ḫʷārazm) und Ātin Āyi im Ferghanatal. Zur Geschichte des Lesens in Usbekistan im 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz 2000, 152 ff.).

18 Cf. for example Kleinmichel, *Ḫalpa*; Bruce Privratsky, *Muslim Turkestan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon 2001; Maria E. Louw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia*, London et al.: Routledge 2007; Ildikó Bellér-Hann, *Community Matters in Xinjiang 1880-1949: Towards a Historical Anthropology of the Uyghur*, Leiden et al.: Brill 2008; Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, *"Religion is not so strong here." Muslim Religious Life in Khorezm after Socialism*, Berlin: LIT 2008; Irene Hilgers, *Why do Uzbeks have to be Muslims? Exploring Religiosity in the Ferghana Valley*, Berlin: LIT 2009.

Gregory Bateson argued that shifts between different realities – like from the mundane to the ritual – are facilitated by cognitive frames.[19] Being mental representations of the world, frames form the way in which we experience our social environment, and structure actions, sensations, and knowledge. Cognitive frames can classify one and the same thing or action as, for example, sacred in one context and profane in another. This is not to propose that ritual and non-ritual are necessarily two separated worlds. Mircea Eliade maintains that neither space nor time was conceived of as homogenous in a religious worldview but could hold various levels of meaning.[20]

The concept of cognitive frames is helpful when dealing with the seemingly paradoxical character of most Central Asian religious rituals and their performative practice. They are more often than not characterized by a simultaneousness of sacral and profane elements, of solemn commemoration and recreational playfulness, careful religious observance and – in the eyes of some Islamic scholars – 'unislamic' behaviour. Major religious holidays were accompanied by public entertainment consisting of food, fireworks, music, juggling, tightrope walking and other amusements. Gleb Snesarev relates a short episode from 1932 where hundreds of people gathered at night time for a *sayl* (festivity) at the shrine of Shaykh Mukhtar Wali in Khorezm in honour of the saint, lit fires, torches and oil lamps, played ecstatic music and had boys perform dances.[21] A dervish gathering in the town of Hazarasp also saw music, rouged dancing boys dressed up as women, jesters, food and hashish consumption.[22] Rituals performed on a smaller, community-based local scale might include collective eating, music, dance and socialising as well. Sacral and mundane time was interlocked, as was sacral and mundane space.

In the craftsmen's life, a central space was the workplace (*kārkhāna*, *dukān*). Within the spiritual frame, the workplace was – and to some extent still is – considered to be the dwelling of the craft's patron saint (*pīr*) and was called *pīrkhāna* (house of the *pīr*) accordingly.[23] Here, candles were lit to the souls of the ancestors and the patron saint, prayers had to be said and purity of body and mind was demanded before the craftsmen started work.[24] Within the frame of mundane, day-to-day activity, however, this was the place where the craftsman performed his craft, met customers and colleagues, and eventually sold his produce. It was an arena of strenuous physical work – some of it considered religiously unclean –, of bargaining, and, surely, sometimes of fraud.

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19 Gregory Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy", in: *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*, Gregory Bateson, ed., New York: Ballantine 1955, 177-193.

20 Mircea Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane. Vom Wesen des Religiösen*, Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Insel 1998, 23, 63-65.

21 Gleb P. Snesarev, *Pod nebom Khorezma*, Moscow: Mysl' 1973, 16.

22 Snesarev, *Pod nebom*, 91; see also Bellér-Hann, *Community*, 315, 352, 357 ff. for Xinjiang.

23 Dağyeli, *Handwerk*, 190 f.

24 Dağyeli, *Handwerk*, 131 f.

The space's ambiguity and fluidity between mundane and sacred spheres or morally approved and disapproved behaviour are mediated through frames, although the sacred always keeps the upper hand for craftsmen with a religious leaning. Don Handelman suggests the use of the term "Moebius framing" – following the model of the Moebius strip – to accentuate the fluctuant, dynamic, polymorphic character of frames that constantly shift and transform between the inside and outside.[25] Prescriptions and rules of conduct originating in the sacred frame, like the ban on drinking alcohol in the workshop as a gesture of respect for the patron saint, exert their influence on the mundane frame where the workshop is also a space for socialising with friends and colleagues who may gather there but not drink, although they might wish to do so. This commandment was also followed by a potter whom I met in 2010 in Samarkand who otherwise adhered rather laxly to Islamic prescriptions. Out of consideration for the patron saint, he categorically turned down offers of drink in his workshop and rationalized the prohibition by pointing to the constant handling of fire and high temperatures in his craft. As his work was demanding and dangerous, the prohibition of alcohol in the workplace was to him a wise forethought preventing accidents.[26]

Orders of knowing: a shared cosmos of knowledge

Performative events played an important role in the everyday life of craftsmen. They not only structured time and space, but also set apart mundane from religious activities, enforced mutual solidarity and maintained a feeling of shared identity through social interaction and a common sacralized text, the *risāla*. Craftsmen formed what Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder coined "communities of practice", people who share a common concern, a sense of belonging and who deepen their expertise by established ways of interacting developed by themselves over time.[27] Textual and personal interaction created a specific knowledge among craftsmen which sometimes overlapped with that of other social groups, but also had its own peculiarities – veiled citations, hints and allusions that could only be understood by those familiar with the *risāla*. This also poses a central difficulty when we deal with these texts today. They tend to be erratic and inscrutable at times, hint at narratives that might not have been passed down to us, and generally offer little by way of explanation as they used to function within a cosmos of knowledge shared by the craftsmen of one profession. For

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25 Don Handelman, "Re-Framing Ritual", in: *The Dynamics of Changing Rituals: The Transformation of Religious Rituals within Their Social and Cultural Context*, Jens Kreinath, Constance Hartung, and Annette Deschner, eds, New York et al.: Peter Lang 2004, 9-20, here 15-19.

26 Dağyeli, *Handwerk*, 191; for similar rationalization processes in Central Asian Islam cf. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Religion*, 168.

27 Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder, eds, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press 2002, 4-5.

the initiated, the *risāla* provided the frames for interpreting their work-related day-to-day routine, mediating possible inconsistencies between religious prescriptions and professional demands, and valuating social class-specific obligations in meaningful ways.

The *risāla* holds up an ideal of craftsmanship imbued with morality, chivalrous behaviour, piety and modesty that was certainly far aloof from standard, everyday conduct. Despite being a manual for a community defined by professional profitable activities, it strongly promotes values of renunciation, honesty and a "moral economy" – concerned with the "dispositions, sentiments, valuations and norms regarding how people should behave with respect to others so as to harmonize conduct and maintain the different protagonists' well-being."[28] This moral economy required strong bonds created and maintained by a collective identity based on an imaginary shared lineage from an apical patron saint cum professional ancestor, an egalitarian ideal[29] and mutual solidarity.[30] The egalitarian ideal manifested itself linguistically in the designations *ulpatgar* (derived from the Arab word *ulfa* – friendship, intimacy) for the professional associations, *hampīr* (the one with the same *pīr*) for fellow craftsmen of the same profession and *birādar* (brother) as the general form of address within the crafts' milieu.

The *risāla*-backed morality of the Central Asian crafts' milieu which demanded modesty, benevolence, a denigration of profit and preference for spiritual values equipped the craftsmen with a powerful counter-scheme vis-à-vis economically, politically and socially more dominant groups and attempted to legitimize at least within their own milieu their class-specific view of how Islamic prescriptions ought to be understood. The idea of *tawakkul*, ultimate trust in God for help and sustenance, is omnipresent throughout the texts even if the term itself does not appear. Through its exempla and other narratives combining *tawakkul* with gainful professional activity (*kasb*), the *risāla* indirectly stands up against certain Sufic positions which stated that *kasb* destroys *tawakkul*.[31]

In terms of normative claims, each craftsman was obliged to possess a *risāla*; this probably remained an ideal, though, and the text's main purpose was presumably not private but public reading and enactment during religious or crafts-specific celebrations. Only through public enactment and recital in various crafts-specific

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28 Andrew Sayer, "Moral Economy as Critique", *New Political Economy* 12 (2007), 261-270, here 262.

29 The ideal was upheld in the *risāla* and in ritual practice but not necessarily in everyday life where crafts' professional organizations as well as the individual workshops were also marked by hierarchical structures counteracting the egalitarian approach (cf. Dağyeli, *Handwerk* and Jeanine E. Dağyeli, "La construction des identités collectives d'après les chartes des corps de métier (risāla) en Asie centrale", in: *La Définition des Identités*, Carole Ferret and Arnaud Ruffier, eds., *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 19/20, 73-94.).

30 Dağyeli, "La construction".

31 Cf. Michael Bonner, "The Kitab al-kasb Attributed to al- Shaybanî: Poverty, Surplus and the Circulation of Wealth", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001), 410-427, here 415.

settings could the *risāla* become a source for the establishment and maintenance of a shared cosmos of knowledge among craftsmen. Conversation supported a constant exchange between the written – allegedly scriptural – text and orally transmitted religious and other lore. The *risāla* is a text with both commemorative and didactic admonishing elements. These two key moods of the text served different purposes on different occasions. Occasions where reverence for the patron saint, commemoration of former masters and recollection of the sacred origins of the craft were the focus called for a different reading from occasions that served predominantly the re-enforcement of morals and discipline, or the teaching of young apprentices and masters.

Performing the risāla *1: sacrality and leisure*

Performing the *risāla* was not just a by-product but one central part of its embeddedness in craft life. Accounts both by Central Asian locals and by colonial officials or researchers of the 19th and early 20th centuries offer a glimpse of the *risāla's* position between scripture, orality and performance. Although these accounts generally tend to be scanty and rare, they are nevertheless valuable sources for the performance of the *risāla*, both at a normative and an individual, lived level. They enable us to identify at least some of the ritual occasions where the *risāla* had been included and to define distinctive features of these occasions.

Often, the *risāla* was recited among craftsmen alongside the Qur'an on religious holidays, on collective pilgrimages to the patron saint's grave or at craftsmen's gatherings. An Eastern-Turkestani mullah called ʿAbdul-Qādir who took down local customs and events for a Swedish resident of Xinjiang noted in 1930: "In some places, craftsmen invite guests into the gardens during summertime to honour their patron saint. They light candles, recite the *risāla* and the Qur'an (*khatm-i Qur'ān*)." [32]

Gatherings like the one described by him in honour of the *pīr* – the patron saint of a craft – were usually called *arvāḥ-i pīr*.[33] Apart from gardens, the meetings could take place at the patron saint's (putative) grave, some other place connected to him or even at a place connected to another prominent religious figure. An *arvāḥ-i pīr* had both a religious and a recreational, entertaining character and was a collective event that intensified relations between craftsmen of one profession. At the same time, an *arvāḥ-i pīr* could serve as the backdrop of a conspicuous display of symbolic capital and the hierarchy within a particular craft. Zbigniew Jasiewicz

[32] My translation. MS Jarring Prov. 464, fols. 1r-48v, here fol. 33r. Cf. the online catalogue http://www.ub.lu.se/collections/digital-collections/the-jarring-collection.

[33] *Arvāḥ* is linguistically the plural of the Arabic word *rūḥ* (soul, spirit). In Central Asian usage, however, the Arabic plural may be used as a singular noun, designating the spirit of a deceased person and can be put into Turkic and Persian plural forms accordingly.

observed in northern Afghanistan how participation in an *arvāḥ-i pīr* was considered a marker of elevated religious and social standing:

> A special occasion [to recite the *risāla*] is the pilgrimage to the grave of the prophet David in Keshendeh. This pilgrimage takes place in the month of Amal and members of the smiths' guild buy a sheep or a goat, rice and fat and then hire a car, paid for by communal funds. By the graveside of the prophet David, under the supervision of the kalantar [craft's elder], the pilgrims read the Koran and risāla, feast, sing and go for a walk… Only the richer craftsmen travel to Keshendeh. According to my informant usto Jacob there are many who do not visit the grave of the prophet and these are people whom he holds in low esteem.[34]

Unfortunately, the precise performative cycle of an *arvāḥ-i pīr* ritual has not been recorded for any region in Central Asia. In the former Soviet part of Central Asia, these and similar meetings at alleged graves of patron saints or other sacred sites ceased during the 1930s. Besides overtly anti-religious campaigns, the restructuring of the labour sphere, the closing-down or musealization of sacred sites and a general emphasis on modernity and modernization all added to the rapid loss of the appeal which these rituals had enjoyed. The last meeting recorded for Tashkent's shoemakers took place in 1926 at Shaykh Zaynuddin cemetery;[35] potters from Samarqand and Penjikent apparently continued their respective *arvāḥ-i pīr* until the early 1930s.[36]

Besides these large professional gatherings, there were less conspicuous – though no less important – occasions for reciting the *risāla*. Central Asian masters tended to work on their own with apprentices and possibly journeymen in their workshop, but in professional matters interacted little with other masters in their day-to-day business. There was, however, work that could not be done individually. The repairing of tools was one of these tasks. According to the *risāla*, tools crucial for the exercise of the crafts were of heavenly origin.[37] This belief provided, for example, the frame for a ritual gathering of blacksmiths to repair the anvil – one of the distinguished tools per se. The anvil was considered a heavenly gift made either from a branch of the paradisiac tree Ṭūbā and a handful of the dust Adam had been created from[38] or, alternatively, from a mountain stone from paradise placed in fire by the four archangels Jabrāʾīl, Mīkāʾīl, ᶜAzrāʾīl

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34 Zbigniew Jasiewicz, "Professional Beliefs and Rituals among Craftsmen in Central Asia: Genetic and Functional Interpretation", in: *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, Shirin Akiner, ed., London et al.: Kegan Paul International 1991, 171-180, here 178.

35 Gavrilov, "Les corps", 215.

36 Elena Peshchereva, "Iz istorii cekhovykh organizacii v Srednej Azii", in: *Kratkie soobshchenija*, Akademija nauk SSSR, Institut etnografii, ed., Moscow: Acad. 1949, 34-36, here 36.

37 Cf. Dağyeli, *Handwerk*, 95-97.

38 E.g. *risāla* of smithery MS IVRUz-2 890, fols. 1v-12r, cf. Paul, *Katalog*, seq. no. 160, Jarring Lit. Prov. 20, Jarring Lit. Prov. 93/19. Cf. for the latter two http://www.ub.lu.se/collections/digital-collections/the-jarring-collection.

and Asrāfil.[39] The heavenly origin was further enhanced by the role which the four archangels served in the *risāla* of smithery: each of them was ascribed a place in one of the corners of the anvil and they were the ones said to have lit the first embers. All this demanded special esteem for the anvil and made it the focal point of a number of craft-related rituals.[40] For its repair, several master blacksmiths would gather to work and feast. Their joint work was accompanied by a recitation of the *risāla* or "relevant passages from the Qur'an" by a mullah invited for this purpose.[41] The Qur'an and *risāla* were likewise recited during the ritual when the already established masters gathered to produce tools for a master-to-be after one of their apprentices had completed his apprenticeship.[42]

Collective feasting, conviviality and entertainment which were – besides the joint work and the ritual performance of the *risāla* – part of these small gatherings also strengthened the common bond between the masters who were otherwise oriented towards their own workshops.

Performing the risāla *2: teaching and re-enforcing values*

Events dedicated to the patron saint and the sacred origins of the craft were not the only occasions for the performance of the *risāla*. Besides these gatherings with their mixed character of religious, commemorating and joyful elements, other acts of public recital of the *risāla* had a more didactic, moralising and admonishing quality.

In some workshops, once or twice a week a literate mullah would visit and gather all craftsmen present before reciting the *risāla*. While everyone was drinking tea, the mullah recited the *risāla* slowly and sometimes paused for explanations.[43] Unfortunately, Gavrilov says nothing about the character of these explanations which leaves some space for speculations. Possibly, this remark refers to seemingly abbreviated and suggestive passages in the texts that served as starting points for further oral elaboration of specific topics. These could be modified according to circumstances and adjusted to the situation in question. Ildikó Bellér-Hann has

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39 Gavrilov, *Risolja*, 34.

40 For example, the candles lit in commemoration of one's previous masters (who often were ancestors in bloodline as well), were placed upon the anvil in smiths' workshops (cf. Pierre Centlivres, *Un bazar d'Asie Centrale. Forme et organisation du bazar de Tashqurghan (Afghanistan)*, Wiesbaden: Reichert 1972, 168 and Jasiewicz "Professional beliefs", 176).

41 Cf. Ol'ga Sukhareva, "K voprosu o genezise professional'nykh kultov u Tadzhikov i Uzbekov", in: *Pamjati M.S. Andreeva*, Nikolaj Kisljakov and Antonina Pisarchik, eds, Stalinabad: Akad. 1960, 195-207, here 199 and Jasiewicz, "Beliefs", 178. Unfortunately, Sukhareva does not specify which Qur'anic verses were deemed relevant.

42 Isa Dzhabbarov, "Remeslo uzbekov juzhnogo Khorezma v konce XIX – nachale XX. v. (Istoriko-etnograficheskij ocherk)", in: *Zanjatja i byt narodov Srednej Azii*, Nikolaj Kisljakov, ed., Leningrad: Nauka 1971, 72-146, here 132.

43 Gavrilov, *Risolja*, 11.

pointed to the important role which people who reproduced written or oral texts played in the evolution of these very texts.[44] By their constant elaboration or neglect of passages, copyists and reciters continuously shaped and reshaped the *risāla* until the mutual stimulation reaped from different oral and written sources ended with the abandonment of performative events connected to the *risāla*.

Craft gatherings could also be used for readings of the *risāla* that leaned more towards the instructive side. The Khojandi textile craftsmen, for example, held regular meetings (*anjuman*) where matters of general interest for the whole craft were discussed and decided, and violations of the agreed conventions punished.[45] Not only were prices and standards set (e.g. the standard width of certain kinds of cloth), but individual masters could be called forth and admonished for not keeping to the convention and thus violating the common interest of and the solidarity within the group. Ultimately, they could also be punished, for example by a ban prohibiting them from entering the market or by having their workshop sealed. During these meetings, instructive religious texts were read to the audience. Tursunov does not go into any detail, but it seems very plausible that the *risāla* held a prominent place among those texts read out as ample space was dedicated to questions of behaviour at these meetings – issues covered extensively by the *risāla*.

Even if the events described here were more solemn in character and lent more towards a transmission of knowledge, morals and ethics, they nevertheless shared the aforementioned ambiguity of Central Asian religious rituals with regard to their mixture of piety and pleasure. A series of four pictures from the late 19th century shows different moments during the initiation of an apprentice into the cart makers' professional organization.[46] They seem rather static, as if the ritual's participants had frozen in action for the photograph shoot, which is very likely given the state-of-the-art technology in photography at that time. Interestingly, the photographs only yield fruitful interpretation if the depicted scenes are considered alongside ethnographic accounts of the event.[47]

The whole ritual is described as an *arvāḥ-i pīr* in honour of the cart makers' patron saint. The first scene, *riżā' andākhtan*, which means "to gain admission/give consent [for the apprentice to enter the group of masters]" shows the new master-

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44 Ildikó Bellér-Hann, *The Written and the Spoken: Literacy and Oral Transmission among the Uyghur*, Berlin: Das Arabische Buch 2000, 33.

45 N.O. Tursunov, "Iz istorii remeslennykh cekhov Srednej Azii", *Sovetskaja Etnografija* 1 (1972), 110-118, here 114.

46 They are taken from the 19th-century photograph collection *Turkestanskij Al'bom po rasporjazheniju Turkestanskago general'-gubernatora general'-ad'jutanta K.P. fon Kaufmana I° chast' etnograficheskaja tuzemnoe naselenie v Russkikh vladenijakh Srednej Azii 1871-1872*, compiled by A.L. Kun'. Volume II. Tashkent: Lit. Voenno-Topogr. Otdela Turkest. Voen. Okruga. Without year. Online resource by the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/287_turkestan.html#intro, pl. 91, no. 301-304.

47 Most illustrative here is Dzhabbarov, "Remeslo", 131-132.

to-be between two other men, probably his own master and the head of the cart makers' association (Plates, figure 6).

The long white shawl crossed in front of the initiate's neck is a cloth which will be put around his waist to signify his admission into the rank of master. Either his master or the elder (*kalāntar*) of the association could perform this task. Then, either of these two men would touch the initiate's breast with bread put in front of him. Of course, there was some local variance to the exact performance of this ritual: in Khorezm the breast of the initiate was touched with two loaves of bread to wish him a good future income from his work symbolized by food (i.e. bread), followed by an exam during which the masters of the association interrogated him about the rules laid out in the *risāla*.[48] In other places the initiate himself was given bread to distribute among those present after the *basmala* and *takbīr* had been said.[49] Then, the initiate received a new cloak (*khalat*) and a *risāla*.[50] The pictures most probably stem from the Samarkand region or the Ferghana Valley and show a slightly different elaboration of the ritual as compared to the previous ethnographic accounts. Figure 7 (see Plates) probably shows the masters' breaking of the bread in honour of the patron saint while the initiate stands by, already with the shawl tied around his waist.

The commentary on the picture calls this activity *kulcha dar baghal andākhtan*, a term that complicates matters more than it might clarify. Literally, this means "to seize puff pastry bread under the armpit", a scene quite difficult to imagine. Possibly, it suggests that the bread will be placed in the initiate's hands, or that the masters will touch his breast with the bread, or that some of it will be put into the initiate's cloak as figure 8 (see Plates) might show.

This picture, however, is given yet another name; it is subtitled *buakhurdi*, while the commentary that accompanies it describes it as a vow.[51] *Buakhurdī* is a non-lexical word difficult to interpret. Taken down by non-native speakers, its first part might either be a local, dialect form of *buya* (wish, hope) or of yet another word. The second part usually designated "to eat" or, more generally, "to take something in/to absorb something". The last picture in the series shows a celebration presumably following the initiation procedure (Plates, figure 9).

Subtitled *bazm-i arvāḥ-i pīr* (feast, banquet), it shows musicians with the Central Asian frame drum *doira* and probably dancing boys dressed up as girls, or else *luli*[52] girls as others would not have been allowed to dance publicly for men.

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48 Dzhabbarov, "Remeslo", 132.
49 Gavrilov, *Risolja*, 11 f.
50 Gavrilov, *Risolja*, 11 f.
51 The original Russian subtitle says *obet*, a term that semantically places the vow in a religious setting.
52 A low-status, peripatetic Central Asian group.

The magic of language: speech acts and textual performance

A ritual text like the *risāla* is not solely a storage place to keep and preserve words, but possesses performative faculties in itself. Inherent performative aspects of written texts relate to their arrangement of content and their graphical composition.[53] Although the *risāla* hardly stands out in terms of noteworthy graphical composition, it follows a fixed, meaningful arrangement. The initial *basmala* and *ḥamdala* (thanksgiving) are marked off from the rest of the text. Also, important passages like the prayers which the craftsman should recite whilst working are written in red ink. The whole composition of different text types within the *risāla* follows a rather fixed choreography, mostly starting with an exemplum of the respective craft's patron saint and culminating in promises or threats of the hereafter according to the individual craftsman's behaviour with respect to his spirituality.

The *risāla* belongs at least in parts to a species of texts that aim at influencing or even transforming the real world by magical means. It possesses both verbal communication act properties like prayers and spells, and non-verbal communication act properties like the protective powers of an amulet and iconographic magical signs that guard its owner in his daily routine or change his environment for the better. Unlike spoken utterances, verbal communication acts in written texts cannot display their magical potency immediately; this rests latent in the text for future use. Spells or recitations with magical properties oscillate between two poles: they are a kind of archived 'frozen pattern'[54] that only comes to life when enacted, i.e. in performance, and they operate by means specific to written texts. With the change of medium from oral to written, texts developed their own strategies of constituting their efficacy as potent speech put into writing. In the *risāla*, as in other magical text genres, magical communication acts are embedded in salvation narratives that attest to their effectiveness as the following *risāla* section illustrates.[55]

> In the time of our prophet, one *tanāb* of land yielded one thousand *batmān* of wheat.[56] Since people were without a *risāla*, the blessing (*barakat*) vanished. God will grant blessing to the grain of whoever holds this *risāla*. He [i.e. the farmer] will be respected and venerated in both worlds, he will do well. [His] last [resting-] place will be the ambrosial paradise. On Resurrection Day, God will allot him an [upper] echelon. The farmers' patrons preceding [him] will be satisfied and pleased. Wherever he goes, everybody will happily partake of his redolence and beauty. Farmers without a *risāla* will be at a loss on Resurrection Day, their crop will be more *ḥarām* (religiously illicit) than *najāsat* (ritually polluting

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53 Christa Haeseli, *Magische Performativität. Althochdeutsche Zaubersprüche in ihrem Überlieferungskontext*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2011, 14.

54 Haeseli, *Performativität*, 17.

55 Haeseli, *Performativität*, 25.

56 Both *tanāb* and *batmān* are Central Asian measures with considerable regional variance. *Tanāb* is a square measure of between 1/6 and 1/2 hectare, *batmān* a mass measure of between approximately 33 kg and 180 kg.

> substances). […] The ancestors say that he who keeps this *risāla* will be protected against fractures, deafness, blindness, paralysis and libel; he will not be affected by suffering … He will gain many advantages from the *risāla*. If he keeps this *risāla* in good faith, he himself will see great benefit. And God is omniscient in His justness. If somebody harvests one *batmān* of wheat in a way corresponding to this *risāla*, his granary will fill up with wheat.[57]

This *risāla* also includes a brilliant example of non-verbal communication acts. The last lines of the text remind the farmer to guard the text together with "the signs written underneath" (see Plates, figure 10, "risāla").

I have not been able to identify these signs so far. They are not identical with the so-called Signs of Solomon, a similar set of undecoded signs assigned magical protective power in Egyptian popular Islam.[58] It remains yet to be solved whether these signs held an overt meaning for the owner of the *risāla* or were meaningful, magical and salutary solely due to the sacrality of the text and their inherent mystery.

The risāla *in the interstices of oral and written transmission*

Even if the precise proportions which oral and written traditions constitute in the *risāla* are not quantifiable, the genre is situated in the interstices of speech and writing. The texts are quite explicit about their intended use: they repeatedly insist that the craftsman should read the *risāla*, that he should have it recited – especially if he himself was non-literate – and that he should listen to the recital. It is important to keep in mind here that reading in premodern societies – *klʲʷāndan* or *ūqimāq* in the texts – was likely to be done aloud and possibly publicly. Performance, composed of transmission and reception, is a decisive element in the existence of a text.[59] Public recital was probably held in higher esteem than silent reading in private, as Sigrid Kleinmichel points out in her study on female religious specialists in Uzbekistan.[60] The *risāla* equally stresses the importance of its physical existence by demanding that the craftsman keep the text with him, a gesture which was said to be of religious merit in itself:

> "It is obligatory (*wājib*) to have the *risāla* recited and to listen [to the recital] while sowing, cutting plants, harvesting corn and ploughing."[61]

> "The one who reads the *risāla* and – if he is not able to read – has her recited and listens, and keeps the *risāla* [with him] will be well-off in this world and in the other."[62]

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57 My translation. MS IVRUz-1 7287, fols. 358r-360r, here fols. 359v-360r, cf. Paul, *Katalog*, seq. no. 168.

58 Cf. Frank Bliss, *Islamischer Volksglaube der Gegenwart*, Bad Honnef: Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung 1985, 52.

59 Zumthor, *Einführung*, 29.

60 Kleinmichel, *Ḫalpa*, 152, 294.

61 My translation. MS IVRUz-1 7287/5, fol. 358r, *risāla* of agriculture, cf. Paul, *Katalog*, seq. no. 168.

The emphasis placed in the *risāla* on recital during the performance of certain professional tasks was also confirmed by an aged woman in the Ferghana Valley who regularly read prayers on behalf of those who came to seek her services. She possessed a lithographed *risāla* which she had received as a gift from a former student of hers years ago. As we looked together at the *risāla* of agriculture, she lamented that nobody cared anymore for the words which one was expected to say whilst working although, from a religious perspective, this was mandatory.

Two experiences made me aware of the possibly mixed written and oral character of the texts, their interaction with a wider cosmos of knowledge in the crafts milieu and their performative potential quite early on in my research. One was a conversation with the Bukharan blacksmith Shokir Kamolov who had consented to me reading his *risāla*. When I reached a passage about the four archangels who each stand at his specific corner of the anvil – the exact location of which was omitted by the text –, I asked the master from which corner I should start to count to know where whose place was. He took me to his anvil and explained the array without a second thought. It struck me at that moment that there must be a much larger tradition than that recorded in the *risāla*, which had obviously been transmitted orally but in close relation to the text-based knowledge.

The second incident happened in the Tajik town of Istaravshan (formerly Ura-Tepa). The combmaker master Usto Soleh related – or rather performed – the initial story of his craft's *risāla* for me. He told of Adam, the first man (and first combmaker-to-be), who did not know how to comb his hair and beard. Therefore, his hair grew into his face until it covered all of it and Adam could no longer see anything. When he bewailed his lot, God sent him instructions on how to carve a comb and how to use it. The telling of the plot was accompanied by Usto Soleh's vivid facial expressions, gestures and vocal modulations, and lasted several minutes. When I read the story later in his *risāla*, it consisted of a few meagre sentences that only conveyed the most basic, necessary facts. After the disappointment had faded, however, I grew convinced that I had just witnessed a way in which the *risāla* might possibly have been performed traditionally during special events. The written text served here as a point of departure, a mnemonic aid for performative elaboration but the performance consisted of much more than the textual message. Dell Hymes thus called for new ways to transform performative acts into writing that also take into account and visualize vocal modulations, tone, gestures, facial expressions and tongues through different sizes and types of script, signs etc.[63]

The written and the spoken interact in many ways in the *risāla*. While the discussion about the anteriority or posteriority of each mode may be fruitless and ul-

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62 My translation. *Risāla* of weavery, MS Instituti Merosi Khattī/Osori Khattī 1514, fol. 2r, Academy of Sciences, Republic of Tajikistan.

63 Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into Performance", in: *Folklore, Performance and Communication*, Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein, eds, The Hague et al.: Mouton 1975, 11-74.

timately impossible to determine, their respective functions have merged into complementary aspects of *risāla* performance. The written text legitimizes the scriptural aspirations of the *risāla* by assuring the divine origin of the genre and the whole crafts sphere as such, serves as a deposit for latent magical communication acts and an archive for patterns of enactment, guarantees an allegedly unchangeable guideline for moral behaviour and may be employed as an *aide mémoire* during performance. The oral mode on its part reached out for emotional responses during the performance, secured an influx of information gathered during religious, craft-specific or other meetings, in madrasa seminars or Sufic tuition into the texts, while the public performance of the text for its part again left its imprint on discourse.

Conclusion

Popular religious texts with their mixed oral and written character and performative potential spoke to their addressees in a number of ways. They shaped and maintained a community-specific self-understanding, habitus, and identity while being at the same time dependent on permanent re-enactment for survival and proliferation. In the case of the crafts' *risāla*, the texts furthermore serve as a means of collective self-assurance and legitimization vis-à-vis social and religious trends to downplay manual work as base or even in some cases religiously illegitimate.

Communal, performative readings were central to the genre of the crafts' *risāla*. Unfortunately, we do not have a single, complete, "thick description"[64] of a *risāla* performance from any occasion. We likewise lack detailed reports of the general ritual proceedings during which the texts were recited and enacted. The most comprehensive account is one by Isa Dzhabbarov on the ceremony for the completion of apprenticeship which is, however, a retrospective narration based on interviews conducted during the mid-twentieth century with elderly craftsmen.[65]

Performance is not just an incidental aside to the *risāla*, neither to the text itself nor to the self-conception it bestowed upon the craftsmen. Part of the bewilderment we, the uninitiated outsiders to the *risāla*, encounter when reading the text is caused by the many lacunae, shortcuts, and veiled citations left to be elaborated during performance. Emotional and sensorial narrative elements as well as didactic remarks and admonition could be added in ways adapted to the character of the specific event, thus rendering the text meaningful for a range of work-related occasions.

The texts promise that "reading" – which predominantly refers to recitation – bestows religious merit (*savāb*; arab. *thawāb*) and divine blessing (*barakat*) upon the owner of the *risāla* as well as the audience. The openness of the text template for

64 Clifford Geertz, *Dichte Beschreibung. Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme* [*The Interpretation of Cultures* 1973], Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 1997, 7-43.

65 Dzhabbarov, "Remeslo", 131-132.

impromptu additions, alterations, and even competing narrative story-lines advanced a steady circulation of religious, moral, and work-related knowledge between different social milieus. The public sphere created during gatherings of craftsmen served as "a medium for expression and an intersection of expressions" at the same time.[66] It was only when the nexus of traditional labour organisation, milieu-specific morality, and work-specific confraternity was destroyed during several campaigns to make the work sphere correspond to socialist conceptions that the *risāla*, its tenets, and its performance lost significance and fell into oblivion.

[66] Chambers, du Toit, and Edelman, *Performing Religion in Public*, 13.

Woe, a Hundred Woes! 19th-Century Muḥarram Elegies in Iran as Performative Poetry*

Roxane Haag-Higuchi

When we think of performative aspects[1] in the religious praxis of Islam, the Muḥarram ceremonies staged in Shiite communities all over the Islamic world will figure prominently in what comes to our mind. Mourning ceremonies in general play a constitutive role in Shiite self-conception and are repetitively performed, both on individual occasions throughout the year and as a part of public events on a regular annual basis. The ceremonies commemorating the violent death of the prophet Muḥammad's grandson Ḥusayn and other members of the Prophet's progeny on the plain of Kerbela in the month of Muḥarram 61/680 have developed into various ritual activities which take place within the first decade of Muḥarram, culminating on the tenth day of this month, ʿĀshūrā, when Ḥusayn was killed. The commemoration of this key event in Shiite creed has been ritualized in three forms: in mourning sessions (*majlis-i rawża-khwāni*[2]), not exclusively held in Muḥarram, but throughout the entire year, where specialized preachers recite martyr narratives; in passion plays (*taʿziya*), and in street-processions (*dastagardāni*).[3] These activities combine into a tightly knit network of performative events involving widespread public participation.

The phenomena have been amply described by European travellers and residents in Iran since the late Safavid period.[4] They have been subject to detailed studies, and the *taʿziya* in particular, as the nucleus of an indigenous Iranian or

* I would like to thank Anna Livia Beelaert and Mitra Sharifi-Neystanak for their valuable comments and fruitful suggestions.

1 The notions of performance, performativity and the performative are at the core of an expanding universe of linguistic and cultural studies. I use these terms in a basic sense that relates to performance as staging a "structured program of activities, performed or presented at a given time by a group of actors to an audience", Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Performativität und Ereignis", in: *Performativität und Ereignis*, E. Fischer-Lichte et.al., eds, Tübingen, Basel: Francke 2003, 11-37, here 15.

2 The term *rawżā* goes back to a famous prototype of the Persian elegy, "Rawżat al-shuhadā'" ("Garden of the Martyrs"), composed in 908/1502-3 by Ḥusayn Wāʾiẓ Kāshifi (d. 910/1504-5), cf. Peter Chelkowski, "Rawḍa-Khwāni", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 8, Leiden: Brill 1995, 465.

3 Chelkowski, "Rawḍa-Khwāni", 465; Jean Calmard, "Ḥosayn b. ʿAli, ii. In popular Shiʿism", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 12, New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation 2004, 498-502.

4 An overview containing many original passages is given in Heinz Halm, *Der schiitische Islam*, Munich: Beck 1994.

Middle Eastern tradition of theatre, has attracted much scholarly attention.[5] New interdisciplinary approaches focussing on performance, ritual and theatrality have uncovered different aspects of, and allowed fresh insights, into this extraordinary religio-cultural phenomenon which combines non-illusionary performance with the evocation of strong emotions and a cathartic response within the audience.[6] It has been emphasized that "to identify the written script with the Taʿziyeh proper is to entertain only a limited view of the tradition as a whole".[7] Just as musical notation cannot provide the impression of a concert performance, the scriptural form of the text does not transmit the sensual whole of its dramatic or recitative transformation. The specific quality of a performance has been described as "what is not within the text, what exceeds the text and cannot be caught up by it".[8]

I would argue, however, for an approach that concedes other qualities to the written text than being merely the vehicle of transmission. I consider the text to be a constant in which its variable performative actualizations are contingent and, to a certain degree, preformed. There are three kinds of texts employed in mourning ceremonies: *taʿziya* texts proper combine dialogues spoken by the ac-

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5 The corpus of research literature has increased considerably since the 1970s. I shall only give a brief overview of titles regarding Iran: an analysis of the social and economic basis of *taʿziya* performances in the Qajar period is given by Jean Calmard, "Le mécénat des représentations de ta'ziyè. I. Les précurseurs de Nâseroddin Châh", *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam* 2 (1974), 73-126, and "Le mécénat des représentations de ta'ziyè, II. Les débuts du règne de Nâseroddin Châh", *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam* 4 (1976-7), 133-162; for a thoroughly conducted early study of the *taʿziya* see Hildegard Müller, *Studien zum persischen Passionsspiel*, Freiburg i.Br. 1966; Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., *Taʿziyeh. Ritual and Drama in Iran*, New York: New York University Press 1979, covers a wide array of themes around Shiite mourning ceremonies; William O. Beeman, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Iran*, Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa 1982, deals with passion plays in part two (65-150); cf. also Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of ʿĀshūrā' in Twelver Shiʿism*, The Hague: Mouton 1978; ʿInāyatullāh Shahidi, *Pazhūhishī dar taʿziya va taʿziya-khwāni. Az āghāz tā pāyān-i daura-yi Qājār dar Tihrān*, Tehran: Daftar-i Pazhūhish-hā-yi Farhangī 1380/2001; Jamshid Malekpour, *The Islamic Drama*, London: Frank Cass 2004; Kamran Scott Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran*, Seattle/London: University of Washington Press 2004; K.S. Aghaie, ed., *The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shiʿi Islam*, Austin: University of Texas Press 2005; Willem M. Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran*, Washington DC: Mage Publishers 2005; Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., *Eternal Performance: Taʿziyah and other Shiite Rituals*, London, New York: Seagull 2010; William O. Beeman, *Iranian Performance Traditions*, Costa Mesa: Mazda 2011.

6 Navid Kermani discusses this aspect in his article "Katharsis und Verfremdung im schiitischen Passionsspiel", *Welt des Islams* 39 (1999), 31-63.

7 William O. Beeman, "Cultural Dimensions of Performance Conventions in Iranian Taʿziyeh", in: *Taʿziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., New York: New York University Press 1979, 24-31, here 26.

8 Manfred Pfister, "*Performance*/Performativität", in: Ansgar Nünning, ed., *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie* [1998], 4th updated and expanded ed., Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler 2008, 562-564, here 563.

tors and commentarial or explanatory texts read out by the stage director.[9] Epic "Kerbela narratives" (*maqtal-nāmas*) are recited during *rawża-khwānī* gatherings and combined with the speaker's improvisation. Most flexible in terms of use and function are religious elegies (*marthiya*, pl. *marāthī*).

This study will focus on religious elegies (as opposed to elegiac poetry sung upon the occasion of the death of a ruler or an individual whose passing away is mourned privately),[10] especially those dealing with the Shiite passion of ʿĀshūrā, and the question of how these poems correlate with the situative and material conditions of their performance. Elegies are employed within virtually each performative framework of mourning ceremonies (*taʿziya*, processions and *rawża-khwānī*). The textual corpus I draw upon consists mainly of poems by Yaghmā Jandaqī (d. 1276/1859) who was one of the most prolific elegy writers of the early Qajar period.[11] The volume of Yaghmā's collected poems[12] contains 75 elegies (*marāthī*), including "dirges for breast-beating" (*nawḥa-hā-yi sīna-zanī*), a special poetic form whose invention is even attributed to Yaghmā.[13] The fact that his mourning songs could still be heard in ʿĀshūrā ceremonies in the 1970s[14] reveals that poems and ritual performance have formed a stable and long-standing union.

I will try to answer the question of how these poems correspond to mourning performances in terms of reference, signs and symbolism. The elegies contain a number of nouns that refer directly to phenomena perceptible in mourning ceremonies (props, colours, spatial signs). These phenomena belong to the category of performative materiality. Materiality in a performance is constituted through corporality, spatiality and vocal qualities. It "emerges, becomes stable for a distinct amount of time and disappears."[15] I will concentrate on how the poems deal with features of corporality and spatiality. The aspect of sound will be left aside, apart from the issue of rhythm, which creates a special bond between performers and audience. I will argue that, beginning with the 19th century, a heightened awareness

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9 For a prosodical and linguistic analysis of *taʿziya* texts cf. Lawrence P. Elwell-Sutton, "The Literary Sources of the Taʿziyeh", in: *Taʿziyeh*, Chelkowski, ed., 167-181.

10 Cf. de Bruijn, Johannes T.P.: "Elegy", in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 8, 1998, 355-357.

11 Yaḥyā Āryanpūr, *Az Ṣabā tā Nīmā*, Tehran: Kitābhā-yi jībī 1350/1971, 112.

12 Yaghmā Jandaqī, Raḥīm Abū l-Ḥasan: *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, ʿAlī Āl Dā'ūd, ed., 2 vols, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Tūs 1367/1988 (vol. 1) and 1362/1983 (vol. 2); the poems in this article are cited from vol. 1: *Ghazaliyāt, mathnawīhā, marāthi, Sardārīya* [1357/1978], 2nd rev. ed. Teheran, 1367/1988.

13 Most literary histories refer to this fact, e.g. Alessandro Bausani and Antonio Pagliaro, *Storia della letteratura persiana*, Milano: Nuova Academia, 1960, 522 f; Āryanpūr, *Az Ṣabā*, 117; Aḥmad Khāṭamī, *Tārikh-i adabiyāt-i Īrān dar dawra-yi bāz-gasht-i adabi*, 2 vols, Tehran: Pāyā 1373/1994, here vol. 2, 344.

14 Nuṣratullāh Nūḥ, "Yaghmā-yi Jandaqī. ʿUbaidī digar dar dawra-yi qājār", *Yaghmā* 30 (1356/1977), 685-692 and 731-737, here 692.

15 Fischer-Lichte uses the abstract nouns Körperlichkeit, Räumlichkeit, Lautlichkeit: cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 2004, 227; cf. also Fischer-Lichte, "Performativität und Ereignis", 17.

of the performative use of elegiac poems led to poetological creativity, e.g. specific prosodical structures like the above mentioned "dirges for breast-beating".

This awareness was due to the importance mourning ceremonies acquired during the Qajar period. They provided an opportunity to foster the rulers' legitimacy and strengthen the cohesive forces of society.[16]

The socio-historical context

The Qajar dynasty that assumed power over Iran towards the end of the 18th century lacked the particular construct of Safavid legitimacy. The Safavids had been successful in combining genealogical details with spiritual and institutional domains, a construct resulting in an extraordinary logic of religious-based legitimization: they traced their origins back to the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, they were heads of a Sufi order and they could rely on government-controlled clerical institutions. The Qajars lacked all of this: they came into power by taking the 'classical' path of a tribal confederation which either subdued its rivals or coalesced with them. They had few means with which to give their rule a charismatic touch and coat it with a religious varnish.

Moreover, with the decline of Safavid governmental authority, the Twelver Shiite *ʿulamā* had gained considerable institutional and economic independence which made them potential critics rather than supportive elements of monarchical authority. Equipped neither with genuine religious legitimacy nor with a reliable institutional basis within the religious establishment, the Qajars encouraged all kinds of visible or even spectacular religious undertakings.[17]

Particularly rewarding in terms of visibility and spectacularity were the Muḥarram rituals lamenting the violent death of Imam Ḥusayn and his group in the battle of Kerbela. Such pious activities were not new, as mourning ceremonies had taken root in the Iranian society as far back as during Safavid times (except the *taʿziya*, which only goes back to the 18th century[18]). During the Qajar period, however, organized mourning flourished in a variety of forms and with extensive social support.[19] The *taʿziya* in particular boomed during the 19th century when recita-

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16 Kamran Scott Aghaie, "Religious Rituals, Social Identities and Political Relationships in Tehran under Qajar Rule, 1850s-1920s", in: *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, Robert Gleave, ed., London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon 2005, 373-392.

17 For the subsidies they granted to new mosques and madrasas cf. Markus Ritter, *Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran*, Leiden et. al.: Brill 2006.

18 Müller, *Studien*, 125-128, opts for the end of the 18th or the 19th century; Peter Chelkowski favours the middle of the 18th century: "Taʿziya", retrieved from *http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tazia* (publ. 2009, accessed 16 February 2013).

19 A concise overview is given for instance in Jean and Jacqueline Calmard, "Muharram Ceremonies Observed in Tehran by Ilya Nicolaevich Berezin (1843)", in: *Eternal Performance: Taʿziyah and other Shiite Rituals*, Peter Chelkowski, ed., London, New York: Seagull 2010, 53-73, here 55-57.

tions developed into theatre performances with specially constructed venues (*takiya*), music, a standard set of characters and props.[20] Travellers' and envoys' reports on these phenomena started to emerge by the turn of the 19th century. William Francklin and James Morier's descriptions of Muḥarram processions and passion plays are among the earliest testimonies of Western observers with regard to this newly developed kind of theatrical performance.[21] Gobineau was so fascinated by the *taʿziya* that he devoted three chapters in his work on Central Asian religions and philosophies to its description.[22] Aleksander Chodźko, who lived in Persia from 1831 to 1841, purchased a manuscript containing 33 *taʿziya* plays from the director of the court theatre, a transaction that testifies both to the prominent role the *taʿziya* played in the early Qajar period and to the contemporary interest of European scholars.[23]

It was not only the central Qajar court in Tehran and its provincial branches, noblemen and high officials that engaged in the activities around ʿĀshūrā. At the same time, many ordinary people were involved in the preparation and execution of the mourning festivities: the bazar, traders, artisans and workmen, women and village folk – the main corporate entities and all social strata – participated in their organization, funding and realization.[24] Their inclusive social character also pertains to the performances and their audience. The practice of the religious ritual had no limitations as to social class or corporative grouping. Hence the performance did not address any limited, clearly defined audience but the Shiite community as a whole. Within this community, the participants could (and can until today) rely on collective memory regarding the details of the passion story, which develops on the basis of a series of strong motifs and images.

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20 Anayatullah Shahidi, "Literary and Musical Developments in the Taʿziyeh", in: *Taʿziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., New York: New York University Press 1979, 40-63.

21 William Francklin, *Observations Made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia in the years 1786-7* [1790], Tehran: Imperial Organization for Social Services, 1976 [repr.], 239-255; James Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople, between the Years 1810 and 1816*, London: Longman et al. 1818, 175-184; cf. Müller, *Studien*, 12 f.

22 Joseph Arture Comte de Gobineau, *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* [1865], Paris: Ed. d'aujourd'hui 1979, chapter 13-15, 296-370.

23 Chodźko's manuscript is the earliest known collection of *taʿzīya* textbooks (1833); cf. Calmard, "Mécénat, I.", p. 87 f.; on this and other collections cf. Müller, *Studien*, 12-22; Peter J. Chelkowski, "Bibliographical Spectrum", in: *Taʿziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., New York: New York University Press 1979, 255-268; cf. also the entry on "Chodźko, Alexander Boreijko" (Jean Calmard), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 5, 1992, 502-504.

24 Kamran Scott Aghaie, "Religious Rituals"; Calmard, "Mécénat, I.", and Calmard, "Mécénat, II"; for women's active participation in sponsoring and organization in Qajar times cf. Aghaie, "Religious Rituals", 382; for a historical case study of a rural area cf. Tomoko Yamagishi: "The Yaghma Family and the Mourning Ceremonies", *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 16 (1998), 7-20.

Plot elements and motifs of ritual remembrance

The literary sources and theatrical adaptions of the passion of the third Shiite Imam Ḥusayn and his followers at Kerbela revolve around a standard set of plot elements: Ḥusayn's cohort of followers are besieged by Umayyad troops and cut off from water supplies; Ḥusayn's half-brother ʿAbbās has his arms cut off when he tries to bring water from the Euphrates to the besieged; Qāsim, Ḥusayn's nephew and son of Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, falls in battle on the day of his marriage to Ḥusayn's daughter Fāṭima; Ḥusayn's youngest son ʿAlī Aṣghar, still an infant, dies when an arrow pierces his throat; Ḥusayn's head is cut off at the hands of Shimr, the Umayyad military commander; the surviving women of Ḥusayn's family and his infant son Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn are deported to the Umayyad court in Damascus.

These are the bare elements of the plot that is remembered and staged during ritual Muḥarram performances. The narrative is known to every single participant/spectator and unfolds in the imagination of the community by virtue of reduced signs and symbols. This is why Andrzej Wirth contends that "[t]he true narrator of the story is the spectator-believer who knows the story beforehand: that is to say the complete story exists in the perceptual code only."[25]

The lyric elegies refer to the underlying martyr story but do not tell it. Against the backdrop of the well-known storyline, they encapsulate the central motifs, emotions and beliefs of the passion: violence, injustice, bodily and mental suffering, the cruelty of fate, victimization and martyrdom, and, last but not least, human failure and guilt on the part of the Shiite community who failed to hurry to the Imam's support and rescue.

Religious elegies

In Qajar times Shiite elegy writing, parallel to the flourishing of the *taʿziya*, thrived in terms of both its quantity and quality.[26] For example, Mīrzā Taqī Khān Amīr Kabīr (d. 1268/1851), the famous chancellor of young Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh (1848-1896), is cited as having asked the poet Mīrzā Naṣrullāh Iṣfahānī Tāj al-shuʿarā to compose elegiac poetry which would differ from "the unappealing (*khunak*) and weak religious elegies that the preachers have recited over and over since Safavid times."[27]

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[25] Andrzej Wirth, "Semiological Aspects of the Taʿziyeh", in: *Taʿziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., New York 1979, 32-39, here 34.

[26] Shahidi compares earlier and modern (from the end of the 19th century) *taʿziya*s and demonstrates the greater artfulness and variety of the latter. Shahidi, "Developments"; an overview is given in Zahra Eqbal (Namdar), "Elegy in the Qajar Period", in: *Taʿziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., New York: New York University Press 1979, 193-209.

[27] Farīdūn Ādamīyat, *Amīr Kabīr wa Īrān*, 6th ed., Tehran: Khwārizmī 1361/1982, 329 f. Calmard refers to this passage and rightly criticizes the fact that Ādamīyat does not mention his sources; "Mécénat II", 146.

Within the broad body of religious elegies, those dealing with Ḥusayn's martyrdom at Kerbela play the most prominent role. Shiite elegy writing developed substantially during the Safavid period,[28] with Muḥtasham Kāshānī's (d. 996/1588) famous mourning poem in twelve stanzas serving as a precedent and blueprint for centuries to come. In terms of context and setting, we hear that Muḥtasham's elegy "was integrated in the repertoire of the *rawżak͟hᵛānṣ*".[29] Elegies are performed at different stages of a mourning session, often in order to mark off one part of the session from the other.[30] Apart from mourning sessions, the poems are also used during Muḥarram processions and in *taᶜziya* performances, where they are either a component of the introduction or integrated into the dramatic dialogue.[31]

In the case of the *taᶜziya*, the dialogue between performers and audience has been called the only dramatic dialogue to be found during these rituals: "The dialogue in terms of two-directional communication occurs between the performer and the spectators and not on stage."[32] A dialogue in the aforementioned mode between a lead vocalist and the participants, with stereotyped forms of antiphony, also occurs in ᶜĀshūrā processions, where this kind of vocal exchange has been characterized as an early dramatic element predating the emergence of the *taᶜziya*.[33]

In the Qajar period, elegies increasingly incorporate dialogic elements. The above-mentioned "dirges for breast-beating", i.e. rhythmic elegiac songs written for and accompanied by breast-beating, induce a particular bond between performers and the audience. Flagellants and breast-beaters figure prominently in descriptions of *taᶜziya* performances in European travelogues from the Qajar period. The penitents who, in extreme cases, express their grief through self-harm move rhythmically, eventually accompanied by music. The Russian orientalist and traveller Ilya Nikolaevich Berezin (1818-1896) tells us about a group of breast-beaters who also function as a choir. Gobineau saw a group of dancers whose movements were accompanied by breast-beating, songs and the sound of a tambourine.[34] The following modern account describes the exchange between performers and spectators combined with rhythmic movements:

> […] the "director" gives the performers the signal for chest-beating by hitting his own chest. The director's initial chest-beating is then taken over by the performers, and gradually becomes a stage gestic sign, and paces the movement and the vocal expression of the actors. After being transformed from a stage direction into a stage sign, the chest-

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28 For earlier examples, de Bruijn mentions the 13th-century Sunnite poet Sayf Farghānī and Salmān Sāvajī (d. 799/1396), de Bruijn, "Elegy", 356.
29 de Bruijn, „Elegy", 356.
30 Müller, *Studien*, 100.
31 Müller, *Studien*, 105 f., 139.
32 Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 37.
33 Müller, *Studien*, 139.
34 Calmard, "Mécénat, I.", 114 and "Mécénat, II.", 141.

> beating gradually takes over the House until it becomes a symbolic act unifying all the spectators, and transforming them into participants.[35]

But the elegiac poems correspond in more than just their rhythmic aspect (which we will examine below) with their performative framework. They include physical elements, objects, props and accessories present on stage or in the procession, like weapons, water or colours. The relation between the elegy text and its material performative surroundings is not merely referential. Rather, the text corresponds with the materiality displayed in the performance. During the event, i.e. the actual play or procession, a mutual reinforcement of what is in the text and on the stage takes place. Apart from the speaker-audience dialogue, the elegy, by entering into a dialogue with the physical components on stage, acquires another performative facet. At the same time, the poem helps to link the actual performative event to its underlying continuity by providing the full ritual meaning of the objects that are signs of specific passion motifs.

Mourners, objects, props, and colours

19th-century travel accounts mention a set of objects displayed on stage in the *taʿziya* and carried along in processions that can be witnessed up to the present day.[36] Drawing on European descriptions from the Qajar period, Henri Massé depicts a typical assortment of objects in an ʿĀshūrā procession: horses, flags and coloured triangular pennants, water bowls, lanterns and an array of weapons. The above-mentioned flagellants also contribute to the performative qualities of the processions: the black-clad breast-beaters (*sīna-zan*) and those who, dressed in long white shirts, beat and injure themselves with chains (*zanjīr-zan*) or swords (*tīgh-zan*).[37]

Weapons indicating the crushing violence committed against the Prophet's progeny figure most prominently among these objects. European travellers, in their eyewitness accounts, tell us of bows and arrows, shields, spears, hauberks, daggers, lances, sabres and swords.[38] Weapons also appear in Muḥtasham Kāshānī's elegy (axe, sword, spear-point)[39] but in Yaghmā's elegies the arsenal, by means of the poetic device of *murāʿāt-i naẓīr* (harmonic imagery), occurs in a more concentrated manner:

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35 Eyewitness account by Andrzej Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 36.

36 Wirth distinguishes between symbolic signs (e.g. colours), stereotyped iconic signs (diverse gestures), and stereotyped index signs (e.g. an empty water bowl). "Semiological Aspects", 35.

37 Henri Massé, *Croyances et coutumes persanes*, Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine 1938, 126-129.

38 Calmard, "Mécénat I", 87, 93; Müller, *Studien*, 66, 109 f.

39 Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* [1900-1924], 4 vols, repr. Cambridge 1976-1978, here vol. 4, 173-177.

تن کجا در خاک و خون غلطیدش از زوبین و تیغ بعد از آن کز تیر و نی شد چاک چاک ای ذو الجناح[40]

The body [hit] by javelin and sword, rolled in dust and blood
to be cut up then by arrow and spear, oh Dhū l-Janāḥ[41]

گفتی از پیکان و خنجر تیغ و گرز آمد هلاک و آسمان برزش به خاک
آن هلاک گرز و تیغ و خنجر و پیکان چه شد ذو الجناح ای ذو الجناح[42]

You said that death came from arrowhead, dagger, sword and mace
and his heaven-like stature [is lying] in the dust

What has happened to that death from mace, sword, dagger and arrowhead
Dhū l-Janāḥ oh Dhū l-Janāḥ

Ḥusayn's horse Dhū l-Janāḥ, "the Winged One", is a common living requisite:

> Close after them [the group of men representing the martyrs, RHH] was led a white horse, covered with artificial wounds, with arrows stuck all about him, and caparisoned in black, representing the horse upon which Hossein was mounted when he was killed.[43]

Next to the weapons, colours abound in ʿĀshūrā performances: multi-coloured flags and pennants carry the names of the martyrs or indicate a specific professional association or neighbourhood. Coloured clothes indicate the different characters' moral qualities, mood or pending fate (red for the bad, green for the good characters; black clothes for mourning, white shroud for approaching death).[44] The poems unfold a set of colours (black, white, red, green, and yellow) which are sometimes part of a fantastic aetiology (*ḥusn-i taʿlīl*) and combined with references to Ḥusayn's passion:

زرد ز روی تشنگان سبز ریاض آسمان سرخ ز خون کشتگان خاک سیاه کربلا[45]

Heaven's green gardens [turned] yellow through [the colour of] the faces of the thirsty ones
the black soil of Kerbela [turned] red with the blood of the killed ones

In the following verse, the colours of sunset and falling darkness recall the tragedy of Kerbela:

ساخت سپهر سبز پی خاک سیه به خون تو سرخ و فکند زرد رو کسوت نیل در برم[46]

The unlucky [green][47] firmament dyed the black ground with your blood
red, and shame- [yellow-] faced, threw an indigo blue[48] garment upon me

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40 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 291 (15/4).
41 "The Winged One" is the name of Ḥusayn's horse.
42 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 298 (20/13-14).
43 Morier, *Second Journey*, 182.
44 Müller, *Studien*, 109 f., 114 f.; Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 32, 34.
45 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 272 (3/7).
46 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 328 (42/15).

One of the central motifs of the passion narrative is the deadly thirst of the besieged group of holy people who are cut off from the nearby Euphrates. In Muḥtasham Kāshānī's elegy, we read

بس ضربتی کز آن جگر مصطفی درید بر حلق تشنهٔ خلف مرتضی زدند

[...]

چون خون خلق تشنهٔ او بر زمین رسید جوش از زمین بدرعهٔ عرش برین رسید

"Many a blow whereby the heart of Muṣṭafá [Muḥammad] was rent
did they inflict on the thirsty throat of Murtaḍá ʿAlí's successor,

[...]

When the blood of his thirsty throat fell on the ground, turmoil arose
from the earth to the summit of God's high Throne."[49]

The utmost importance of water, and the lack thereof, is symbolized in water bowls which are part of the *taʿziya* props and are carried along in the processions. In *taʿziya* performances, the water bowl indicates the Euphrates, empty water bowls refer to thirst and denied access to water. These items have been mentioned as examples of the passion play's non-illusionary conception of theatre.[50] Again, the elegies assume the function of charging the concrete item with its religious meaning and unravelling its emotional potential. Yaghmā's elegies combine the motif of thirst (dry lips) in an antithetical relation to blood, tears, and water:

بر لب خشک تو از دیدهٔ تر دارد جای جاودان در عوض اشک اگر خون گریم[51]

Your dry lips eternally are the place for my moist eyes
even if I weep blood instead of tears

آه که شد شکسته دل خسته جگر برادرم با لب خشک و چشم تر غرقه به خون برادرم[52]

Alas, brother, my heart is broken and weary, my brother
with dry lips and moist eyes, drowned in blood, my brother

As can be seen from the verses quoted above, the dominant and often repeated word in the elegies is blood. In the performance, blood – either real or artificial – is the major sign (index sign, like the water bowl, in semiotic terminology[53]) of

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47 *Sabz-pay* is a metric shortening of *sabz-pāy*: *badbakht*, cf. *Lughat-nāma-yi Dihkhudā*, s.v. *sabz-pāy*, retreived from http://www.loghatnaameh.org/dehkhodasearchresult-fa.html?searchtype=0&word=2LPYqNiy2b7Yp9uM (accessed 27 April 2013).

48 The colour of mourning.

49 Browne, *Literary History*, vol. 4, 174 (Persian) and 176 (English translation).

50 Müller, *Studien*, 46; Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 35.

51 Yaghmā Jandaqi, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 326 (41/4).

52 Yaghmā Jandaqi, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 327 (42/1).

53 Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 35.

the wounds and the suffering inflicted on the martyrs of Kerbela. Blood, weapons, death, and terrible thirst all contribute to the atmosphere of cruelty that pervades the founding narrative of Shiite Islam.[54]

The elegies refer directly to the objects carried along or displayed on stage; at the same time, they evoke both the historical scene and the religious meaning connected to these objects. Through this technique, i.e. by combining direct material reference with the evocation of what pertains to passion, martyrdom and salvation history in the cultural memory of the group, the elegies heighten the religious valency of the objects in the performance.

Spatiality and temporality

The name of Kerbela has become synonymous with Twelver Shiite passion. Kerbela and the actual battle site, the plain of Māriya, are the centre and gravitation point for a spatial concept which includes political and religious aspects. The *taʿziya* performance can only signal the topography of Ḥusayn's passion, and does so in symbolic representation:

> It is traditional to place the Imam and his family on the platform and his enemies outside, all round the platform. To signify that they are under siege, the family of the Imam never leave the platform while they are waiting to play their roles [...].
>
> The passing of time, the distance between two locations, and a long journey are shown conventionally, by taking a turn round the platform once or twice. And when an actor departs from a point of origin towards a new destination, he will announce the name of the new location on his arrival.[55]

In the poems, references to Kerbela and the plain of Māriya abound, such as, for example, in the above-mentioned verse

> Heaven's green gardens [turned] yellow through [the colour of] the faces of the thirsty ones
> the black soil of Kerbela [turned] red with the blood of the killed ones.

or in the following example:

عرصهٔ دار و گیر شد دامن و دشت ماریه رستهٔ تیغ و تیر شد سنگ و گیاه کربلا [56]

> The plain and desert of Māriya turned into a tumultuous battlefield
> the shrubs and stones of Kerbela turned into a growth of swords and arrows

In their wording, however, the poems enlarge both the geographical and symbolic space of religious significance. In the following verses, mention is made of

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54 For a discussion of the theatrical notion of cruelty (*cruauté*, according to Antonin Artaud) in the *taʿziya* cf. Kermani, "Katharsis", 47-55.

55 Reza Ale-Mohammed: "An Iranian Passion Play: ‚Taziyeh' in History and Performance", *New Theatre Quarterly* 17 (2001), 54-66, here 58.

56 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 272, poem no. 3, vers 3 (3/3).

the four rivers Euphrates, Oxus, Aras, and Tigris, and, by means of *īhām* (amphiboly), the Nile (Nil) is added to the list of major waterways:

تشنه‌لب تفته‌دل از خون بنین و اشک بنات راندی از نیل فرات
سوی جیحون و اَرَس دجلهٔ بغداد فلک از تو فریاد فلک[57]

With thirsty lips and heartsick from the sons' blood and the daughters' tears
you have driven from the city of Nil on the Euphrates[58]

to the Oxus and the Aras the Tigris of Baghdad, heavenly fate
rescue from you, heavenly fate

The rivers assembled in these verses mark the boundaries of the area where the tragedy of Kerbela is remembered. The Euphrates and Tigris, Aras (today the border river of north-western Iran) and Oxus outline the regions in which Shiite communities have settled and, consequently, the wide geographical area of a huge, imagined pious audience. *Falak*, moreover, meaning both firmament and fate, refers to a higher level of spatiality. The religious idea of Kerbela points to a connection between earth and heaven, a connection which overrules all physical spatial perceptions, like in Muḥtasham's following verse:

باد آن غباررا بمزار نبی رساند گرد از مدینه بر فلک هفتمین رسید

"The breeze carried that dust to the Prophet's Tomb:
dust arose from Madína to the seventh heaven."[59]

In Yaghmā's Muḥarram elegies, a great variety of verses combine heaven and earth, referring both to the extreme physical distance and to the fact that in the crucial event of Kerbela, this distance is annulled. I give two examples out of many for the combining of heaven and earth:

با همه پستی از زمین سر ز قدوم شاه دین سود به عرش و فرقدان تخت و کلاه کربلا[60]

Although the earth is low, with the arrival of the King of Faith
the throne and crown of Kerbela touched the highest heavens [lit. the heavenly throne and the stars of Farqadān[61]]

آسمانی با زمین کردی برابر آسمان آسمان شرمی آخر آسمان[62]

You have levelled heaven to the ground, heaven
heaven shame on you, heaven

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57 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 318 (35/21-22).

58 *Nil-i Furāt* is a city between Baghdad and Kufa, *Lughatnāma-yi Dihkhudā*, s.v. *nil*, retrieved from http://www.loghatnaameh.org/dehkhodasearchresult-fa.html?searchtype=0&word=2YbbjNmE (accessed 1 March 2013)

59 Browne, *Literary History*, vol. 4, 174 (Persian) and 176 (English translation).

60 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 272 (3/4).

61 Farqadān: "Two stars near the pole of the Lesser Bear", Francis J. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, 8th ed. London 1988, s.v.

62 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 330 (44/2).

In the category of spatiality, the function of the poems' texts becomes most clear: with a standard set of poetological devices (antithesis and harmonic imagery), the texts unfold all the meanings of spatiality that are inherent in the extremely simplified symbolic stage set. The poems repeatedly mention the local setting of the historical event of the battle. What is more important, however, is that they transgress the narrow borderline of direct reference and physical locality into religiously defined notions of space or, rather, non-space.

Whereas spatiality is one of the elements constituting the materiality of a performance, temporality is not subsumed under this category.[63] Within the framework of performance studies, the subject of temporality is dealt with in terms of how a performance, as a sequential procedure with material components (space, sound and body), emerges in a limited and structured time frame.[64] In this study, however, the notion of time in elegiac poems will be discussed in regard to reference and meaning. Therefore, the aspect of temporality will be treated as analogous to spatiality.

Muḥarram ceremonies are ritualized in a standard repetitive form of commemorating and actualising a given interpretation of a historical incident. The temporal aspects of the ritual are threefold: they refer to a factually established historical incident, they are cyclically repeated on a certain calendar date and they contain the prospect of a future otherworldly timelessness within the framework of salvation history. The actual performance of the ritual holds the central position between the historical root and the future vanishing point and includes them both. Whereas theatre stresses the coincidence of past and present in the performance[65], in Muḥarram ceremonies an eschatological perspective is inherent in the historical incidence.

In Yaghmā's elegies, no mention is made of any historical period or moment. Measured time occurs occasionally and is closely related to the cruelty of fate:

هفتهٔ کین مه شهر سال دغل قرن دغاست — خون هدر مال هباست
شب غم روز ستم شام الم صبح عزاست — خون هدر مال هباست
[...]
عصر عصر خطر و روز هی روز جدال — وقت خود وقت قتال
دور دور ستم و عهد هی عهد جفاست — خون هدر مال هباست
[...]
حکم حکم قدر و امر هی امر قضاست — خون هدر مال هباست[66]

63 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik*, 227 f.

64 Beeman, "Cultural Dimensions", 27, discusses literal time, representational time, and non-time.

65 Navid Kermani cites Peter Brook with "Das Wunder der Vergangenheit, die zur Gegenwart wird" („Katharsis", 55).

66 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 288 (14/1-2; 5-6; 8).

It is the week of hatred, the month of evil, the year of deceit, the century of perfidy
blood wasted, property destroyed

It is the night of grief, the day of injustice, the evening of agony, the morning of mourning
blood wasted, property destroyed

[...]

The afternoon is the afternoon of danger and the day is the day of strife
the time itself is a time of slaughter

The period is a period of cruelty, the age is an age of oppression
blood wasted, property destroyed

[...]

The command is the command of fate and the order is the order of destiny
blood wasted, property destroyed

The well-arranged temporal terms occur in conjunction with notions of violence. The violence inflicted on Ḥusayn and his followers – the central element of the Shiite narrative – links the three temporal aspects: it dominates the historical story, it is the central element of the Muḥarram ceremonies and points to the Day of Judgement when the guilt of the followers who did not rush to Ḥusayn's aid is eventually forgiven:

شام عاشوراست این یا صبح محشر آسمان آسمان شرمی آخر آسمان[67]

Is this the evening of ʿĀshūrā or the morning of Resurrection Day
heaven shame on you, heaven

Rhythm

In the category of rhythm, body, space and sound stand in correlation.[68] Rhythm, "in relation to beat and metre is an organising principle that does not aim at evenness but at regularity. [...] It arises both out of repetition *and* deviating from repetition".[69] In this section, I will speak not of metrical but of rhythmic qualities that are to be found in elegies from Qajar times. Rhythmic structures lay the ground for dialogic performance. The basic dialogical situation between protagonist and audience is mirrored, for example, in the famous elegy by the most renowned Qajar poet, Ḥabībullāh Qā'ānī (1223/1808-1270/1854)[70]. His elegy is structured throughout according to a staccato pattern of concise questions and answers:

67 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 330 (44/4).
68 Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik*, 232.
69 Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik*, 233 (italics in the original).
70 Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel 1968, 328-331.

بارد چه؟ خون! که؟ دیده، چسان؟ روز و شب، چرا؟

از غم، کدام غم؟ غم سلطان کربلا

"What rains down? Blood! Who? The Eye! How? Day and Night! Why?
From grief! What grief? The grief of the Monarch of Karbalá!"

etc.[71]

Another performative, rather than linguistic, dialogic pattern applies to the "dirges for breast-beating", as outlined above: the solo singer sings a line, the penitents repeat it and beat their chests, the second line is sung, and the penitents beat their heads with both their hands.[72] Yaghmā re-discovered and refined a poetic form called *mustazād*,[73] which he used mostly for the purpose of accompanying or inducing rhythmic breast-beating. A *mustazâd* breaks up the equivalence of the two *miṣrāʿ*s (hemistich) in the *bayt* (couplet), and combines a long with a short line, called *ziyāda* (addition). The first, longer lines formally constitute an autonomous *ghazal* or *qaṣīda*. With respect to rhyme and metre, the short lines also form a separate homogenous entity. The metre of the short line is basically independent, but often constitutes a shortened version of the long line. In spite of this formal inhomogeneity, the *bayt* is still a syntactical and semantic whole:

افراخت چو در ماریه سبطِ شهِ لولاک — خرگاهِ اقامت

از هفت زمین تا نهمین خیمهٔ افلاک — بر خاست قیامت

ز اندیشهٔ این رنج طرب‌کاه غم انگیخت — کز چرخ فرو ریخت

سر زیر زمین ساخت نهان از زبر خاک — سامان سلامت[74]

When in the plain of Māriya the family of the Prophet pitched
the dwelling tent

From the seven lands to the ninth tent of heavenly spheres
turmoil broke out

From thinking of this joy-shattering grief-provoking pain
that poured down from the heavenly sphere

From above the earth hid its head underground
all well-being

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71 Browne, *Literary History*, vol. 4, 178 f. (Persian text), 180 f. (English translation). Persian edition (without punctuation marks): Ḥabībullāh Qā'ānī Shirāzī, *Dīwān*, Muḥammad Jaʿfar Maḥjūb, ed., Tehran: Amīr Kabīr 1336/1957, 948 f.

72 Henri Massé, "Poèmes funèbres consacrés aux imams", in: *Le Shîʿisme imâmite. Colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 mai 1968)*, Université de Strasbourg, Centre de recherches d'histoire des religions, eds, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1970, 271-279.

73 Elias J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* [1857-1901], 6 vols., repr. London: Luzac 1958-1963, here vol. 1, 87 f.; Browne, *Literary History*, vol. 2, 43 f.; Rypka, *History*, 96 f.

74 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 316 (34/1-4).

Yaghmā varies this scheme by cutting the short line into two parts and inserting a refrain, in this example an interjection of mourning:

پس از مرگ تو گیتی جاودانی	وا ویلا	صد وا ویلا
سیه پوشد به مرگ زندگانی	وا ویلا	صد وا ویلا
تو محمل بسته زین خونخواره منزل	ا ویلا	من از دنبال محمل
خروشان چون درای کاروانی	وا ویلا	صد وا ویلا
به غیر از جعد مشکین گیسوانت	وا ویلا	که از خون ارغوانت
کسی سنبل ندیده ارغوانی	وا ویلا	صد وا ویلا[75]
After your death the earth will wear forever	woe	a hundred woes
black, for life has died	woe	a hundred woes
you departed from this bloodthirsty resting place	woe	me behind your litter
lamenting like a caravan bell	woe	a hundred woes
apart from your curly black hair	woe	red from your blood
none has ever seen a red hyacinth	woe	a hundred woes

Through this technique, the poem – deviating from the even metre – acquires a particular rhythm, generated by the insertion of a short three-syllable exclamation (*wā waylā*) into the centre of the *mustazād*-verse. This middle part remains steady with its constant lament. This poetic trick helps Yaghmā to incorporate emotional interjections into the structure of the poem, analogous to unmetric exclamations that accompany breast-beating or flagellation (like "Yā Ḥusayn" or "Salawāt!"[76] or "Ḥasan! Ḥusayn! Ḥasan! Ḥusayn"[77]).

Anaphoric sequences and *radīfs* (refrain; identical words that follow the rhyme proper) are distinctive features of the elegiac poem whereby "[t]he poet emphasizes his words rhetorically."[78] In the above-mentioned example, there is more to the repetition than mere emphasis. Anaphora, rhyme and rhythm constitute a bond between the text and human body. The repetitive rhyme, refrain and rhythm all have mnemotechnical functions; they help participants to memorize the poems and recite them collectively, in response to the solo-singer. Rhythm, moreover, creates a physical bond between the singer and the audience and it is one of the main ways of bestowing an active role on the audience.

Whereas the clusters of motifs referring to physical and perceptible items in the procession and on stage occur as early as in the 16th-century elegy by Muḥtasham

75 Yaghmā Jandaqī, *Majmūʿa-yi āthār*, vol. 1, 344 (56/1-6).
76 Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 34.
77 Gobineau, *Religions*, 311 ("Hassan! Housseïn!").
78 de Bruijn, "Elegy", 356.

Kāshānī, the new refinements to rhythm in 19th-century "dirges for breast-beating" indicate a new consciousness of the elegies' performative functions. Due to the importance given to Muḥarram and ʿĀshūrā ceremonies during the Qajar period, new artistic expressions focussed on entering into a dialogue with their concrete surroundings and the audience.

Conclusion

During the Qajar period, Shiite Muḥarram ceremonies developed into elaborate events, organized, sponsored and carried out with wide social participation and with the active support of the ruling dynasty, the government and noble families. All social groups became involved in both the preparation and execution of different ritual performances. Active and reactive roles blend together in the realization of ritual activities; many observers of the passion play stress the blurred borderline between actors and spectators in the *taʿziya* or, in other words, the "liminal status of the audience as performer-spectator."[79] For the passion play, it has been suggested that "[t]he true narrator of the story is the spectator-believer who knows the story beforehand: that is to say the complete story exists in the perceptual code only."[80]

Most studies have focussed on how the *taʿziya* and ʿĀshūrā processions are performed and on which theatrical means are employed. Their central argument lies in the fact that the audience is familiar with the content and plot of the Muḥarram narrative, and that reduced signs and codes ("shorthand references"[81]) are enough to activate cultural memory and arouse the emotions which are constitutive for collective Shiite identity.[82]

This paper has argued, however, that the texts employed in Muḥarram ceremonies play an important role in the performative process. Drawing on examples from early 19th-century elegies, I have tried to show how the text and the material context of the ritual event form a dense performative network.

Select referential elements in the texts work on various levels. The Muḥarram elegies display a direct, synchronous reference to material items and sensuous elements present in the performance (like weapons, colours and space), i.e. the materiality of the performance. The objects help to reduce the complexity of the historical event into a compact ritual, providing the crucial and recognizable signals for the audience, the "stereotyped signs in the audio-visual code".[83]

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79 Beeman, "Cultural Dimensions", 27.
80 Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 34.
81 Peter Brook, "Leaning on the Moment", p. 52, cited in Kermani, "Katharsis", 55.
82 Kermani, "Katharsis", 53.
83 "The use of the stereotyped signs in the audio-visual code of the Taʿziyeh theatre indicates a highly canonized production style." Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 35.

Yaghmā's mourning songs refer directly to the props which form an indispensable part of the performance. They thus create a firm bond of synchronic reference and representation in the event of the performance itself. The poetic wording incorporates the objects that constitute "the stereotyped signs in the audio-visual code" and, moreover, unfold a wider and deeper range of meanings. The text and its performative surroundings correspond to, interact and mutually reinforce each other. Objects, props, colours, spatiality and temporality are re-contextualized within the framework of the passion narrative. The poems and the materiality of the performance work together in shaping the participants' perception. The elegies dissolve the physical limitations of the performance and charge the objects with their religious meaning. At the same time, the visual representation of what is mentioned in the poem reinforces the poem's link to the ritual cosmos.

The prosodical devices of rhyme, refrain, and rhythm form another link between the elegies and the performative event. They are implemented in a way that facilitates the collective movement of the participants and the dialogic exchange between speakers and audience. In the early Qajar period, rhythmical features figure prominently in the newly developed "dirges for breast-beating". The prosodic conceptualization of these poems is made for a dialogic performance, which then also stimulates the audience to play an active part. It is a physical bond which in turn bolsters the stability of the text.

If one stretches the boundaries of the theoretical term of dialogue far enough, one could call dialogicity the basic characteristic of the elegiac poems. The dialogue or "two-directional communication"[84] between the poem and the performative context is not limited to the vocal and emotional exchange between a leading person in the procession, or performer, and the participants or audience. In my view, a dialogue also takes place between the text and all physical aspects of the performance which pertain to representation, reference and semantic enrichment.

The poetic features of Yaghmā Jandaqī's elegies illustrate a heightened consciousness regarding the performative function of the elegies which correlates with the importance acquired by public Muḥarram ceremonies in the Qajar period. Yaghmā systematically inserted occasions for dialogue into the poems in order to warrant the involvement of large crowds of people, and thereby reinforce the feeling of being part of a confessional community and strengthen the consciousness of a collective Shiite identity.[85] His songs must have worked efficiently within the ritual events they were composed for. As the elegies intertwined with their performative context, they acquired a compact consistency which made them endure in the long-term. It is not only due to its predefined structures and its periodical repetition that the ritual acquires its durability, but also to its concentration and density in performance with all its components, including the elegies.

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84 Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 34.

85 Cf. Beeman, "Cultural Dimensions", 29; Wirth, "Semiological Aspects", 34.

Preaching Performances Revisited: The Narrative Restaging of Sermons in the Travelogue of Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217)

Sabine Dorpmüller

> Amongst the things we saw in Cairo, were four congregational mosques superbly built and of beautiful design, as well as many other mosques. In one of these congregational mosques one day the preacher delivered the sermon according to the (orthodox) Sunni practice … He discoursed so sweetly and gave so moving a sermon as to humble the hardest heart and cause the tearless eye to flow. He came to the sermon dressed in black according to the ʿAbbaside usage. His costume was a black cloak (*burda*) topped by a scarf (*ṭaylasān*) of fine black cloth which in the Maghrib we call *iḥrām*, and a black turban, and he was girded with a sword. When he had ascended the pulpit, at the first step, he struck it with the end of his scabbard a blow which those present heard as it were a call to silence. He did it again when halfway up, and a third time at the end of his climb. He then saluted the congregation right and left, standing between two black banners, white-checkered, that were planted at the top of the pulpit.[1]

Ibn Jubayr's travelogue, the *Riḥla*, provides us with vivid and colourful descriptions of sites and sights the Andalusian traveller experienced on his journey. In addition, the literary adaptation of his journey is a valuable source for the study of the history of Islamic homiletics. Witnessing a substantial number of preaching events, Ibn Jubayr seizes the multimediality of these performances in their audio-visual capacities. A shrewd observer and gifted reporter, he succeeds in restaging the sermons for his readers.

Ibn Jubayr certainly focuses in his account on the extra-ordinary: the highlights of preaching choreographies but also performances that in his eyes failed. How does Ibn Jubayr's travelogue re-imagine preaching performances? What are the criteria for the assessment of these performances? What is a successful preaching performance? A close reading of Ibn Jubayr's account alongside these questions will enhance our understanding of the performativity of homiletic events.

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1 Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr. Translated by Roland Broadhurst* [1952], 3rd ed., New Delhi: Goodword Books 2013, 42-43. In his translation Broadhurst prefers to use the Arabic terms *khuṭba* and *khaṭīb*. In all quotations from his translation these terms are replaced by "sermon" and "preacher" to ensure a fluent read. Other Arabic termini in Broadhurst's text are also translated; the Arabic words are transcribed and added in parentheses. Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d., 24-25.

The traveller and the travelogue

In February 1183, the Andalusian traveller and writer Ibn Jubayr set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca. His journey took him via Egypt to the Hejaz and, after visits to Baghdad, Aleppo and Damascus and on his return via Akka, Tyros and Sicily, brought him back to Granada where he safely arrived in 1185.[2] "Ibn Jubayr returned home a more mature, cultured Muslim. Unlike his predecessors though, Ibn Jubayr carefully recorded and then circulated an account of his trip, preserving the wisdom that he had acquired for posterity."[3] His two years of travelling are recorded in his *Riḥla*, which can be regarded as a prototype of a burgeoning genre of travel accounts.

Ibn Jubayr was the first to diligently document the details of his journey and make them accessible to a wider audience through the composition of his travelogue. The traveller and his travelogue inspired and influenced an entire genre of Arabic literature. The *riḥla* as a journey or voyage had flourished since the 8th century, whereas the *riḥla* as travel account only developed in the 12th century. Ibn Jubayr is regarded as "one of the founders of the literary genre of the voyage in Islam".[4] Charles Pellat, in his article on Ibn Jubayr in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, characterizes his *Riḥla* as "the first and one of the best of the works of this kind"[5].

Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Jubayr al-Kinānī (1145-1217) was born in Valencia, where his family had lived since 740. His family were descendants of the tribe of Kināna that had previously settled close to Mecca. Ibn Jubayr studied theology, law, and literature and soon displayed poetic skills. He became secretary of the governor of Granada, Abu Saʿid ʿUthmān b. ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, one of the princes of the Almohad dynasty.

In the company of his friend, the physician Aḥmad b. Ḥassān, Ibn Jubayr, in his late thirties at the time, set out for the pilgrimage in February 1183. Six years later, he embarked on a second journey that also lasted for two years. However he left no account of this second voyage. In 1217, he set out for a third journey to Alexandria where he intended to teach. Ibn Jubayr died in Alexandria on 17th November 1217.

Ibn Jubayr's *Riḥla* has been widely copied by other authors. However, the travelogue itself has only survived in one manuscript, held at the University Li-

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2 The dates of departure and arrival are 3rd February 1183 – 25th April 1185 / 8th Shawwāl 578 – 22nd Muḥarram 581.

3 Kathleen Bush-Joseph, *Ibn Jubayr: The Rihla*, Senior Honors Seminar in History, 2012-2013, 7. Electronic copy available at: http://ssrn.com/abstract=2659480 (accessed 23 January 2016).

4 Houari Touati, *Islam & Travel in the Middle Ages* [2000], translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2010, 264.

5 Charles Pellat, "Ibn Djubayr", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 3, Leiden: Brill 1971, 755.

brary in Leyden. The Leyden manuscript[6], containing 210 pages, was copied at Mecca in the year 875/1470-71 from a manuscript in the Maghribi character. The text was edited by de Goeje (1907) who revised the earlier edition of William Wright (1852).The *Riḥla* was translated into several European languages.

A standard feature of travel accounts is the specification of the motivation for travelling: in the case of Ibn Jubayrs's *Riḥla* the story goes that his master forced him to drink seven cups of wine. Regretting what he had imposed on pious Ibn Jubayr, he filled the cups with gold and in doing so provided him with the means to travel to Mecca and repent his sin. This story was, however, not passed down in the text of the *Riḥla*, but was only later told by the Andalusian historian al-Maqarrī.[7] Ibn Jubayr does not mention in his account why he set out on the pilgrimage – and why should he? There is no need for the pilgrim to justify his motivation since the pilgrimage is considered a duty for all Muslims. The pilgrimage itself and travelling for knowledge, possibly to gain recognition in his home community, as well as a dash of spirit of adventure might suffice us as motivations for the journey. The travelogue starts without further ado:

> The writing of this chronicle was begun on Friday 30th of the month of Shawwāl, 578 (A.H.) [25th of February, 1183] at sea opposite Jabal Shulayr [Sierra Nevada] may God with His favor grant us safety [...] Ahmad ibn Hassan and Muhammad ibn Jubayr left Granada – may God preserve it – on their pilgrimage to the blessed Hejaz – may God give easement and help and reveal His beneficent works – at the first hour of Thursday, 8th of Shawwāl 578 (A.H.) which fell, according to the foreigners […] on the 3rd of February (1183).[8]

The first entry on 25th February 1183 is a flashback to the beginning of the journey earlier in February. The travelogue is structured and divided up according to the months of the Islamic year. The entries are irregular, with some occurring on a daily basis and others at different intervals, never longer than a month.

The *riḥla* has to be read as a literary narrative, as an art genre, rather than as a geographical report. Not all details can be accepted as fact. Ibn Jubayr's account of the Pyramids is, for example, by no means accurate. It can be presumed that he did not visit them himself:[9] "Here, in the *riḥla* tradition, it is clear that in both East and West the search for knowledge via the experience of travel sometimes drove the traveler to exaggeration and even outright invention."[10] The records of travellers must be worth telling: evocative and extra-ordinary experiences are particularly suited to appealing to the readers of the travelogue. As a scrupulous observer, Ibn

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6 Cf. William Wright, "Preface", in: *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr, edited from a Ms. in the University of Leyden by William Wright, second edition revised by M. J. de Goeje* [1852], Leiden: Brill 1907, 13-22, here 14 f.

7 Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Maqarrī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Beirut 1968, vol. 2, 385-6.

8 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 25; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 7.

9 Bush-Joseph, *Ibn Jubayr*, 15.

10 Ian Richard Netton, "Preface", in: *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage, and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam*, Ian Richard Netton, ed., Richmond: Curzon 1993, xiii.

Jubayr succeeds in grasping the immediacy of seeing and telling in his account using the perspective of the first person narrator "as a means for 'motivating' the narrative act. It refers what he is writing about to a personalized instance, expressed in his name both to identify him and offer a guarantee of what he is saying, on the one hand, and to give voice (through narration) to his subjectivity, on the other."[11]

Through encounters with the unfamiliar, pilgrims were forced to reflect on their identities and values and to renegotiate their place in the Islamic *umma*: "Travel dissolves social solidarity just as much as it destabilizes people emotionally and psychologically. When he leaves his familiar space, the traveler penetrates another space that is foreign to him."[12] Ibn Jubayr identifies himself as a Sunni Muslim of the Mālikī school of law, a Westerner, Maghribī, Andalusian, a subject of the Almohad dynasty. Long passages on the virtues of the Almohads bear witness to his loyalty and deep affinity to the dynasty. Nevertheless, although he had believed that al-Andalus is favoured in comparison with other regions of the Islamic world, Ibn Jubayr confesses frankly that the fruits in Mecca are even more delicious than at home.[13] Throughout his journey, his homeland al-Andalus remains his fixed point of comparison. Like all travellers, he sought comfort in times of hardship and alienation in the familiar, in fellow Westerners. Ibn Jubayr returned to his homeland with new concepts of difference and similarity which he had encountered in other travellers. By sharing his experiences in the travelogue, he provides his audience the opportunity to widen their own horizons.

Was the travelogue intended as a travel guide for his compatriots of the Maghreb travelling to the East? Ibn Jubayr lists and comments on hostels where pilgrims (from the West) can stay and cautions the readers against embarking on certain routes while traveling east. He carefully compares the cities he visited in terms of the numbers of hospitals, mosques, and schools. To facilitate the reading for his Maghribī audience, he converts measurements to the units used in the Maghreb and al-Andalus. Moreover, he recommends mosques and preaching events which are worth visiting.

A great variety of preaching events is depicted in Ibn Jubayr's travelogue: alongside Friday sermons, routine sermonizing, he offers vivid description of preachings as mass events, as initiation rites, of lay preaching, heretical preaching and sermons on specific occasions such as during the nights of Ramadan. In his accounts of preaching events Ibn Jubayr tends to have an eye for the extravagant, exceptional and unexpected and expresses his delight at the dramatic and exceptional gesture: "Meticulously describing what he saw and heard, Ibn Jubayr preserved in his account a captivating glimpse at twelfth-century travel in the Mediterranean world."[14]

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11 Touati, *Islam & Travel*, 239.
12 Touati, *Islam & Travel*, 242.
13 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 97.
14 Bush-Joseph, *Ibn Jubayr*, 16.

Ethical entertainment for ear and eye

The narrative skills of Ibn Jubayr help both the pre-modern and contemporary reader to imagine what he witnessed. Undoubtedly, it is religious practices that served Ibn Jubayr as a marker of distinctiveness in fellow travellers and locals from other parts of the Islamic world. He displays a remarkable curiosity about novel customs and behaviour and the differences in local preaching practices and the accompanying rituals. The following report on the Ramadan nights in Mecca illustrates this:

> The next night, the 23rd, the reciter was one of the sons of a rich Meccan, a boy who had not reached the age of fifteen. His father had made uncommon preparations for this night, having arranged a chandelier, made of wax, with branches, set with all manner of fruits, fresh and dry, and furnished with many candles. In the middle of the Haram, towards the Bab Banu Shayba, was a sort of quadrilateral prayer niche (*mihrāb*) with a wooden balustrade, standing on four pedestals and having at its summit wooden shafts, from which hung lamps, and on which stood lighted lanterns and torches. Round the prayer niche were driven sharp-headed nails on to which were fixed the candles that surrounded all the niche. The branched chandelier bearing the fruits was then lit. In all this the father of the lad had shown assiduous care.
>
> Near to the prayer niche was placed a pulpit adorned with a cloth chequered in many colours. The youthful imam arrived and said the *tarāwīḥ* prayers and completed his recitation of the whole Koran, all who were in the sacred Mosque, men and women, assembling around him. In his niche, he could hardly be seen for the many rays of the candles that encompassed him. He then came forth from his niche, strutting proudly in his rich apparel, with the port of an imam and the calmness of youth, his eyes shaded with collyrium (*kuḥl*) and his hands hennaed to the wrists. But from the press of men he could not make his way to the pulpit, so one of the guardians of that part took him in his arms and brought him to the top of the pulpit, where he settled smiling, and signed in greeting to those present. Before him sat the Koran readers, who began to recite in chorus. When they had finished a tenth part of the Koran, the (young) preacher rose and pronounced an eloquent sermon that moved most spirits, more from its mellifluous delivery (*tarjīʿ*) than from its piously recollective (*tadhkīr*) or emotional qualities (*takhshīʿ*). In front of him, on the steps of the pulpit, was a small group of men holding candlesticks in their hands and crying aloud, 'O Lord! O Lord!' at each pause in the sermon. The readers began their reciting during these pauses, and the preacher held silence until they had done. He then returned to his sermon, freely recalling various pious memories, and referring during this to the Ancient House – may God honour it – baring his arms in pointing at it. He followed on by mentioning the Well of Zamzam and the Maqam, pointing at them with both fingers. He ended with the valediction of the blessed month, saluted repeatedly, and made invocation for the Caliph and for all the Emirs for whom it was customary to pray. He then descended, and that large assembly dissolved. They had found the preacher intelligent and talented, although his discourse had not touched the soul as had been hoped and the pious recollection that left his tongue had not gone beyond the ears. It was reported that selected persons among this assembly, such as the Qadi and others, were provided with abundant food and sweetmeat, after the fashion of

> such meeting. The father of the preacher that night incurred large expenses on the preparation which we have described.[15]

Preaching in Islam is not confined to disseminating religious ideologies. According to Charles Hirschkind, "sermon[s] […] are part of the acoustic architecture of a distinct moral vision, animating and sustaining the ethical sensibilities that enable ordinary Muslims to live in accord with what they consider to be God's will."[16] Hirschkind aims in his study of modern taped sermons to explore the diverse strands of Islamic preaching in its political, ethical, and aesthetical dimension. He recognizes that the emphasis in Islamic sermons is on rhetorical and stylistic elements such as the tonal quality of voice, the modulation of affect, and the rhythmic structure. These features, however, are not meant to convince by argument but to move the listeners to an intended ethical attitude.

> The practice of listening to sermons […] is grounded first and foremost in a recognition and elaboration of the ethical and therapeutic virtues of the ear. From early on in the development of Islam, sermon audition has been identified as essential to the cultivation of the sensitive heart that allows one to hear and embody in practice the ethical sensibilities undergirding moral action. Beyond the cognitive task of learning rules and procedures, listeners hone those affective/volitional dispositions, ways of the heart, that both attune the heart to God's word and incline the body toward moral conduct.[17]

In Western societies, in the course of the Enlightenment, the sense of sight was ranked superior to that of hearing; listening came to be perceived as passive reception. Islamic preaching, with its strong focus on repetition, ornamented speech, sound and rhythm, was generally dismissed for giving priority to form over substance. Hirschkind, however, argues that "[…] instead of perceiving listening as a cognitive act without regarding its practical and sensory dimensions leading to passive, silent perception of hearing, the style of listening should be perceived as a style of listening that recruits the body in its entirety, and focus on the repertoires of bodily responsiveness to sermon rhetoric."[18] Listening in this sense is rather active than passive: "*Samʿ*, in other words, is not a spontaneous and passive receptivity but a particular kind of action itself, a listening that is a doing."[19] The audience of a sermon engages in a listening practice organized around rhythm and repetition: both serve as the primary means of persuasion. Tahera Qutbuddin, in her research on early Islamic oratory, argues with Hirschkind that repetition not only fosters mnemonic capacities but also encourages enjoyment and reflection on the small variations. Repetition and strong rhythm are the pillars of the aesthetics of Islamic oratory: "The consistent, almost relentless use of the first feature of paral-

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15 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 151-152; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 127-128.
16 Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, New York: Columbia University Press 2006, 8.
17 Hirschkind, *Soundscape*, 9.
18 Hirschkind, *Soundscape*, 27.
19 Hirschkind, *Soundscape*, 34.

lelism (*izdiwāj*), in which two or more adjacent phrases, clauses, or sentences, show identical or near identical syntax, is one of the most conspicuous features of the early Arabic *khuṭba*."[20] Repetition plays such an important role in Arabic oratory because, according to Barbara Johnstone Koch, it "persuades by making its argumentative claims linguistically present".[21]

It is indeed an important step to recognize the primacy of the ear and the modus of listening as an activity. With Ibn Jubayr, however, we can well seize the multimediality of preaching performances in their audio-visual capacities: the exuberant decoration with candles and fruits, the vivid colours of the fabrics, the marching in of the beautifully clothed and finely adorned preacher in the above example show that at these preaching events the eye was as much entertained as the ear. The ritual context of this preaching performance is the initiation of a young man who is delivering his first sermon. The delivery of a sermon in the festive atmosphere of the last ten nights of Ramadan functions as a rite of passage which transforms the youth into a full and active member of his religious community in Mecca. The sermon also aims to transform the audience and to attune hearts to moral action by combining beauty and truth. However, this goal is not achieved by the young Meccan since his words do not touch the souls and reaches no further than the audience's ears.

Touati in his book on medieval travelling defines the primacy of the ear as the "listening paradigm" since "*samāʿ* […] became one of the principal internal institutions of medieval learned culture" manifest in the genealogical transmission from master to disciple.[22] However, "*ʿiyān*" or "*autopsia*" is "incorporated into voyage as well, giving rise to a novel principle of knowledge and description".[23] This principle is not alien to Islamic culture: *shahāda* is to witness something seen. Muslim jurists, for their part, established a primacy of the eye over the ear.[24] With Ibn Jubayr and his travelogue we notice a clear move to "the school of gaze".[25]

Again, we have to stress here that Ibn Jubayr mostly reports on extra-ordinary preaching events, ones that are outstanding in his eyes and worthy of reporting and which take place in particular localities and on special days. Dramatic effects and the attraction of the masses are characteristic features of popular entertainment. In the following section we will discuss how preaching contexts vary between efficacy and entertainment, between functions of ritual and theatre.

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20 Tahera Qutbuddin, "*Khutba*: The Evolution of Early Arabic Oration", in: *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms: Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs*, Beatrice Gründler and Michael Cooperson, eds, Leiden: Brill 2008, 176-273, here 211.

21 Barabara Johnstone Koch, "Presentation as Proof: The Language of Arabic Rhetoric", *Anthropological Linguistics* 25 (1983), 47-60, here 47.

22 Touati, *Islam & Travel*, 9.

23 Touati, *Islam & Travel*, 9.

24 Touati, *Islam & Travel*, 101.

25 Touati, *Islam & Travel*, 253.

Preaching and performance theory

The sermons that are transmitted through preaching collections as well as through historiographical and literary sources do not give much insight into their actual performance. Nor do we find much information on the performativity of texts in preachers' manuals, which normatively define when, where and how to deliver a sermon. The travelogue, in contrast, provides us with rich evidence about the performances of sermons: the preacher's gestures, facial expressions, modulations of voice and emotion, and the audience's response. Whilst traces of these features are to be found in historiographical literature, they are abundant in the travelogue of Ibn Jubayr.

Routine sermonizing takes place in the frame of the Friday service in the congregational mosque(s) of each city and is allotted a symbolically charged position within this very frame:

> Traditionally, the Friday sermon occurs within a highly structured spatial and temporal frame; it is a duty imposed upon the Muslim community that was established through the exemplary practices of the Prophet. As an obligatory component of the weekly routine of a Muslim, the *khatib*'s performance anchors its authority in its location and timing, in the *khatib*'s competent enactment of a tradition-required role as established within the instituted practices of Muslim societies.[26]

However, the choreography of the Friday service witnessed by Ibn Jubayr in Mecca creates a different, festive, atmosphere far beyond ordinary routine:

> Beside the noble Maqam is the preacher's pulpit (*minbar*) which also is on four wheels in the mode we have explained. When, on Fridays, the time of prayer approaches, it is brought to the side of the Kaʿbah that faces the Maqam, which is that which runs between the Black and ʿIraq corners, and is propped against it. The preacher (*khaṭib*) comes through the Gate of the Prophet – may God bless and preserve him – which is opposite the Maqam and in the colonnade which runs from east to north. He wears a black dress, worked with gold, a black turban similarly worked, and a scarf (*ṭaylasān*) of fine linen. All this is the livery of the Caliph, which he sends to the preachers of his land. With lofty gait, calm and stately, he slowly paces between two black banners held by two muezzins of his tribe. Before him goes another of his people bearing a red staff, turned on a lathe, and having tied to its top a cord of twisted skin, long and thin, with a small thong at its tip. He cracks it in the air with so loud a report that it is heard both within the Haram and without, like a warning of the arrival of the preacher. He does not cease to crack it until they are near the pulpit. They call (this whip) the *faraqaʿah*.
>
> Coming to the pulpit, the preacher (*khaṭib*) turns aside to the Black Stone, kisses it, and prays before it. Then he goes to the pulpit, led by the Zamzam muezzin, who is the chief of the muezzins of the noble Haram and also dressed in black clothes. He bears on his shoulder a sword which he holds in his hand without girding it. The muezzin girds the preacher with the sword as he ascends the first step, which then, with the ferrule of his scabbard, he strikes a blow which all present can hear. He strikes it again on the second step and on the third. When he reaches the top step he strikes the fourth blow, and

[26] Hirschkind, *Soundscape*, 10.

> stands facing the Kaʿbah praying in low tones. The he turns to right and left and says, 'Peace upon you, and the mercy and blessings of God.' The congregation returns the salutation ['Upon you be peace'] and he then sits. The muezzins place themselves in front of him and call for prayer (*adhān*) in one voice. When they have finished, the preacher delivers the address, reminding (*ḏakkara*), exhorting (*waʿaẓa*), inspiring (*khashshaʿa*) and waxing eloquent (*ablagha*).[27]

Modern performance theory can contribute to the study of pre-modern sermons, as has been proved by studies of medieval Christian sermons. The dynamics of efficacy and entertainment represent one of the major concerns of performance theory: the ritual compared to other performances emphasizes efficacy although it may well display aesthetic qualities of entertainment. Richard Schechner has established an important differentiation between ritual and theatre: he sets out the "efficacy-entertainment braid"[28], a schema for representing the fluctuating dominance of efficacy and entertainment. The two poles of the braid, efficacy and entertainment, are always in tension. While cautioning that no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment, he asserts that the distinction between ritual, aimed at efficacy, and theatre, directed towards entertainment, depends primarily on the context and function of a performance. A preaching performance that aims to be efficacious, namely to effect a transformation of the audience, has a clear emphasis on efficacy. In Schechner's analysis, efficacy was the dominant concern in the performance of medieval plays and church ritual, whereas bards and troubadours aimed to provide entertainment.

Following Schechner's assertion that efficacy dominates in ritual, Beverly Mayne Kienzle observes that "the sermon, both belonging to and differing from its liturgical/ritual context, desires to be efficacious and to transform."[29] On the other hand, the sermon may have qualities of entertainment "even though manuals of the *artes praedicandi* take a cautious stance on the subject."[30] The tension between efficacy and entertainment elaborated by Schechner for theatre applies to sermons as well.

The entertaining potential of sermons and the dramatic reputation of some premodern preachers lead to the exploration of the relation between drama and sermon. Manfred Pfister speaks of the multimediality of dramatic texts: they employ both acoustic and visual codes and channels, such as voice quality, intonation, and gestures and properties of the setting.[31] The other senses (smell, touch and taste) are only activated to a limited extend. Furthermore, dramatic texts have two layers:

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27 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 91-92; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 72-73.

28 Richard Schechner, *Essays in Performance Theory* [1971], New York: Taylor & Francis 1988, 120-122.

29 Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons and Their Performance", in: *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, Caroly Muessig, ed., Leiden et al.: Brill 2002, 92.

30 Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons", 92.

31 Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988, 6-12.

1) the literary text and the enactment it requires, 2) the features that are added by the production. He also observes that drama differs from other forms of literature in its collectivity of reception and production; it requires an audience and is produced by a group of actors. Finally, comparing drama to other public performance activities, Pfister observes: "Structurally speaking, the features associated with dramatic texts […] (the overlapping of internal and external communication systems, relative autonomy, multimediality and the collective nature of production and reception) are all qualities that also apply to non-literary performance activities."[32]

Likewise, sermons entail acoustic and visual elements, including physical movement. "Moreover, sermon texts contain a dual layering: what the preacher and audience actually did and a second one on the production the historian attempts to reconstruct. Furthermore, the sermon, like theatre has a collective reception."[33] Unlike theatre, Kienzle argues that the sermon is produced by one person, not a group of actors. This is a narrow interpretation of Islamic preaching as well: although the preacher stands alone on the pulpit, unlike in theatre productions which have various actors on stage, we cannot deny the role of the Qur'an readers and muezzins in front of the preacher as well as, most importantly, the role of audience which interacts with the preacher during the sermon. The crucial difference from theatre is that "the preacher is expected to meet moral requisites and to serve as intermediary of God's word; and the sermon's purpose is unequivocally moral and religious."[34]

What can we learn from Ibn Jubayr about the delivery of the sermon? According to his report individual preachers engage in multimedia performances that transgress the boundaries of preaching and enter the realm of theatre in Schechner's sense. The preaching performance is evaluated in terms of its efficaciousness: how Ibn Jubayr judges the effectiveness of a sermon will be dealt with below. Before this, however, I shall investigate the vast repertory of preaching settings and instruments such as the ones used in the marching in of the preacher on Fridays in Mecca.

Finally, performance theory also emphasizes that repeated performance plays a role in constructing identity. Pre-modern texts on preaching theory treat the preacher's identity mainly in terms of commission and inspiration. However, it is interesting to reflect on whether the preacher constructs his identity through the performance of a sermon or whether the performance expresses the fixed identity of the preacher. In order to understand how preachers gained a hearing and constructed an authoritative identity we will take a look at another preaching event that Ibn Jubayr witnessed in Baghdad where preaching had become a means of mass communication.

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32 Pfister, *Drama*, 11.
33 Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons", 93.
34 Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons", 93.

The framing of preaching performances

The first preaching session (*majlis*) Ibn Jubayr experiences in Bagdad takes place in the Madrasa al-Niẓāmiyya, the main institution of Shāfiʿī learning. The preacher, the distinguished scholar and head of the Shāfiʿīs, Raḍī l-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, stands out due to his learned, calm and dignified style of preaching, and his relaxing and pacifying effect on the souls of the congregation. Ibn Jubayr visits his sessions on two occasions.[35] Yet, the most impressive orator according to Ibn Jubayr is another scholar of Baghdad, the Ḥanbalī jurist and historian Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201)[36]. He is fascinated and thrilled by Ibn al-Jawzī's performances. His enthusiasm is patently obvious: he attends three sessions during his short stay. The preaching superstar Ibn al-Jawzī is reported to deliver sermon in front of huge audiences.[37] Many of his exhortations are honoured by the presence of distinguished guests: the caliph, his mother (his patron and of Ḥanbalī school in general), wezirs, qadis, high officials, and scholars.

The delight that Ibn Jubayr takes in these events is, according to him, beyond words. The preaching performance stands out against everything that Ibn Jubayr has previously witnessed since the whole sermon is in rhyming prose, full of consonance, and embellished with similes, metaphors, and other tropes and figures of speech such as alliteration. The following text highlights the virtues of Ibn al-Jawzī and one of his preaching performances:

> And we were present at the sermon of a man who is no ʿAmr or Zayd [i.e. nor ordinary man]. 'Under the fur is the prey';[38] he is the wonder of all time, and the consolation of the faith. He was the head of the Hanbalis and a specialist in learning of the highest rank, an imam of the mosque, and a cavalier on the track at that calling, renowned for his splendid triumphs of eloquence and learning, controlling the reins of verse and of rhymed prose, and one who has dived deep into the sea of thought and brought forth precious pearls … One of his most splendid marvels and greatest miracle was the following: On his ascending the pulpit, the readers, who numbered more than twenty, began to recite the Koran. Two or three of them spoke a verse of the Koran in a moving (*taṭrīb*)[39] and impassioned (*tashwīq*) rhythm, and when they had done, another group of the same number recited another verse. So they went on, alternately reciting verses, from various

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35 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 195-196.

36 Henri Laoust, "Ibn al-Djawzī", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 3, Leiden: Brill 1971, 751 f.

37 "I never let up exhorting the people and urging them to repent and live lives of righteousness. Up to the time that I composed this book more than one hundred thousand men repented in my presence, and I cut off the hair of more than ten thousand lax young men and converted to Islam more than one hundred thousand." (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa-l-mudhakkirīn*, ed. and transl. Merlin S. Swartz, Beirut: Dar el-Machreq 1971, 231).

38 Someone who combines all good qualities and advantages and makes everybody else dispensable. Broadhurst explains: „The significance of the proverb here is that all you desire is under the skin of this brilliant faqih." (*Travels*, 379).

39 The term *taṭrīb*, a term from music aesthetics, indicates the relation of harmony between listener and performer, e.g. in Sufi performances.

> chapters, until they had ended the reading. The verses they gave were so similar that even a man of ready mind could scarce tell the number or name the order; yet when they had finished, this great and remarkable imam, passing speedily into his disquisition and pouring into the shells of our ears the pearls of his utterance, punctuated his discourse at each paragraph with the rhyming opening words of the verses recited, giving them in the order of their reading without prematurity or deferment, and ending with the rhyme of the last.
>
> If anyone present at his sermon had thought to name what was recited verse by verse in the proper order he would have failed. What then of one who fits them rapidly and extemporarily to a fine sermon! 'Is not this an enchantment, then or do you not see?' (Q 52:15) 'Surely this is manifest favour' (Q 27:16) … Ah, but how far is talk of him from reality!
>
> When he had ended his sermon, he offered some gentle exhortations and talked of some clear events in his memory, so that hearts were struck with longing, spirits melted with ardour, and the sobs of weeping resounded. The penitent raised loud their voices and fell on him like moths on a lamp. Each one offered him his forelock, and this he cut, and, touching each man's head, he prayed for him. Some fainted and he raised them to him in his arms. We witnessed an awesome spectacle which filled the soul with repentance and contrition, reminding it of the dreads of the Day of Resurrection. Had we ridden over the high seas and strayed through the waterless desert only to attend the sermon of this man, it would have been a gainful bargain and a successful and prosperous journey. […] Throughout his audience, questions came rapidly upon him and notes flew to him and quicker than the twinkling of an eye he answered. At times most of his sparkling collucution would consist of answering these questions.[40]

Ibn Jubayr did not experience anything similar in the preachers in the Maghreb or in Mecca and Medina. He states that he never thought that someone could possess souls in such a manner and play with them as Ibn al-Jawzī did.

Studies of performance address the relationship between a performer and his audience, focusing on the requisites of social convention and context. The attention to context relates to the concept of framing – the conceptual framework that the mind uses to interpret actions or messages. The framing of a particular performance involves the space where it takes place, the people participating, the objects or symbols they use, and the sort of speech they utilize. A sermon was generally delivered by an authorized preacher using expected patterns of language. It took place in an authorized location such as the mosque or specially designated spaces; for instance, courtyards extended to the streets for large crowds.[41]

In order to make the realm of preaching in the Islamic world of the 12th century more tangible we will now investigate the setting (place and time), voice modulations, gestures, tools and aids, preacher's attire, sounds and smells, content, transformation and action, and failure as reported by Ibn Jubayr.

The preaching performances described in the travelogue take place in highly structured public places: Ibn Jubayr mentions the obvious mosques (for Friday

40 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 229-231; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 196-198.
41 Cf. Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons", 90-92.

congregations) and madrasas, the Haram in Mecca, but also an open public space next to the house of Ibn al-Jawzī,[42] on the Eastern side of the river, adjoining the palace of the caliph, where he delivers his discourse outside of the context of the Friday service on a pulpit. He also preaches every Thursday at the gate of Badr, in a courtyard of the palace of the caliph, its premises towering above it. This place is part of the caliph's harem and is partitioned off for receptions and speeches that can be heard from the premises by the caliph and his mother and whoever else is present from the harem. The gate is opened to the common people who enter the place after it has been covered with mats. In public spaces, seating is rented out to the audience.

The stage of the sermon is generally the pulpit (*minbar*). In Mecca, this is on wheels and is moved to the Kaaba for the Friday service.[43] In front of the pulpit, seated on chairs, readers recite the Qur'an and call for prayer.[44] The *minbar* might be draped with colourful cloth like on Ramadan nights in Mecca.[45] The size of the pulpit and its height vary widely: in Medina the pulpit has eight steps. The door is closed and is opened on Fridays. It is covered in ebony wood. One can see the place of the prophet, but it is covered with ebony in order to protect it and to prevent anybody from sitting on it. People place their hands underneath it and stroke it in order to obtain blessings from touching it. Next to the right leg of the *minbar*, where the preacher puts his right hand while preaching, there is an oblong hollow ring of silver that he puts on his finger. The ring is similar in style to that of a tailor but bigger. People claim that it was the toy of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn played with while their grandfather was preaching.[46] During the nights of Ramadan special pulpits of wood are constructed in the pavilions (*khaṭīm*) of the different schools of law.[47] For the Shāfiʿī Imam a *minbar* is built high up and covered with candles and lamps.[48] The Mālikī Imam has some stakes and planks of wood which he uses as a prayer niche, with some candles underpinned by stones. The performance is received favourably by Mālikī Ibn Jubayr as the "result was remarkable for its simplicity, being removed from pride and display and with the bounds of humbleness and modesty."[49] One of the Qur'an readers gets up and ties his garment between the trivets of the wooden construction of the prayer niche.[50]

Sermonizing took place alongside the official Friday prayer right after the afternoon prayer on Friday until evening closed in,[51] Thursday and Saturday morning[52],

42 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 196.
43 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 72.
44 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 195.
45 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 129, 132.
46 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 170.
47 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 127-133.
48 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 130.
49 Broadhurst, Travels, 157; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 133.
50 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 132-133.
51 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 195-196.

and on the last ten nights of Ramadan when recitals of the whole Qur'an were finished.[53] Moreover, preachers addressed their audiences after the evening prayers. The prayer for rain and the related sermon took place immediately after sunrise.[54]

The special character of the prayer for rain is also illustrated by the fact that the Imam is dressed in white: the Qadi of Mecca leads the congregation to the prayer place behind the Maqam, the preacher dressed in white, proceeding between two black banners.[55] In the territories of the caliph, the preacher's attire is black in the style of the Abbasids. Ibn Jubayr describes the preacher's dress in Cairo as consisting of: a black cloak (*burda*), a shawl (*ṭaylasān*, called *iḥrām* in the West), a black turban and a sword girded around his waist.[56] In Baghdad, next to the palace of the caliph, Ibn al-Jawzī removes his *ṭaylasān* out of respect for the place.[57] In Mecca, the preacher's dress is black and decorated with golden thread. The cloak, turban, and the *ṭaylasān* are of black linen. These are the official robes that are sent by the caliph.[58] During the nights of Ramadan, the young preachers are beautifully and exquisitely dressed; however, Ibn Jubayr does not report the details of the preachers' attire. He does, however, comment that the boys have applied *kuḥl* around their eyes, and that their hands were covered with henna up to their wrists.[59]

Alongside dress, preaching events are marked by tools and aids: the sword and scabbard which the preacher hits on the steps while ascending the pulpit; the banner, attached to the *minbar*, mostly black but at times adorned with white;[60] the whip with its cracking sound made when the preacher marches in on Friday in Mecca;[61] the impressive illumination on the nights of Ramadan with chandeliers and candles as well as the intense scent of incense.[62] On the occasion of the prayer for rain Abraham's Maqam is put next to the door of the Kaaba and the copy of the Qur'an that belonged to the caliph ʿUthmān is fetched from its place and displayed.[63]

The soundscape during the preacher's sermon is determined by the occasion of the preaching event and also by the size of the congregation. Before the sermon starts, the soundscape features the marching in of the preacher (cracking of the whip, hitting sounds of the sword and the turmoil of people entering) and the re-

52 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 106-200.
53 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 127-133.
54 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 138-139.
55 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 138.
56 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 24.
57 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 200.
58 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 72.
59 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 128.
60 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 24-25, 72-73.
61 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 72-73.
62 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 129.
63 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 138-139.

cital of Qur'anic verses and call for prayer by up to twenty muezzins.[64] During the sermon, reactions to the discourse of the preacher by the audience sound across the congregation. During the nights of Ramadan in Mecca, Ibn Jubayr could not hear the sermon of the Shāfiʿi Imam because of the large and agitated crowd.[65] After the sermon, the audience's crying and weeping becomes loud as repentant believers confess their sins.

The language of the sermon is usually Arabic; however, as Ibn Jubayr reports, a preacher of Khorasan addresses his audience in both Arabic and Persian. The readers in front of the Imam tune the hearts of the convened believers to the ritual through modulation: filling them with yearning and longing through appealing chanting (*talāḥīn*) and distressing touching melodies (*nagḥamāt*).[66]

Gestures made by preachers while sermonizing are not recommended and, if at all, should be modest, as recommended by the preacher's manual *Adab al-khaṭīb* of Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 724/1324).[67] We find the same reluctance in the *artes praedicandi*.[68] Since the performance of the sermon is lost, one approach would be to retrieve possible gestures from the text. For example, the deixes "here" or "there" might be reinforced by the preacher pointing. Ibn Jubayr confirms this in the context of Mecca where the preachers point in the direction of places referred to in the sermons such as the Kaaba or the well of Zamzam.[69] Furthermore, Ibn Jubayr mentions the graceful gestures (*malīḥ al-ishāra*) of a preacher from Khorasan.[70]

Ibn Jubayr was able to witness more dramatic gestures in a performance by Ibn al-Jawzī: through his repeated recital of poetic verses he himself became apparently so excited and agitated that on the point of fainting, he quickly stepped down from the pulpit, marking his performance with an abrupt end. Again, we should stress that this preaching act took place outside of the weekly Friday service, thus allowing for a more dramatic performance.[71]

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64 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 197.

65 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 132.

66 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 178.

67 ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār: *Kitāb Adab al-khaṭīb*, ed. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulaymānī, Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Ahrām li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ 1998, 122-124.

68 Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons", 101.

69 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 128.

70 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 159.

71 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 200. On a normative level, Ibn al-Jawzī differentiates between licit and illicit performances: "If he possesses the art of composing khuṭbas or has memorized one let him deliver it. There is no objection to this, for his eloquent words will have an effect upon those present, and the ignorant person will not turn to an ascetic saying: 'This is a show (*taṣannuf*) – not a genuine expression from the heart.' But speaking of a 'show' there is one that is permitted (*mubāḥ*), and that is the one that draws the hearts of men. […] Those who have studied the Quran and its allusions, metaphors, and figurative speech know what an impact eloquent speech can have on the hearts of people." Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣāṣ*, 221-222.

Transformation and action: key criteria for a successful performance

What are the criteria for a good or successful sermon according to the assessment by Ibn Jubayr? The modern reader of his travelogue might expect the content to be of major importance. However, in regard to the content of the sermons Ibn Jubayr provides us with hardly any information. Instead, it is the description of the setting, the audience (especially high-ranking officials), and performance of the preaching events that matters. From this we might conclude that the contents of the sermons were not at all extraordinary for Ibn Jubayr and thus not worthy of extensive commentary. It seems that he listened to the same eschatological themes of death, judgment, and suffering that are in general the central topics in Islamic preaching since they – by inciting desire and fear – are meant to stimulate ethical virtues such as humility (*khushūʿ*), fear of God (*taqwā*), and modesty (*tawāḍuʿ*).

The scarce information we receive is that in some sermons the preachers refer to the respective months of the Islamic year. Ibn Jubayr also mentions that another sermon contained an exegetic commentary of Qur'anic verses such as the "Throne verse" (Q 2:256).[72] Impressed by the learned discourse of the preacher from Khorasan, he notes that "branches of knowledge" were touched upon.[73] The political relevance of sermons becomes apparent in the prayer for the caliph, the emir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and local political representatives.[74] Who is included marks the recognition of a certain ruler over the territory where the sermon takes place.

The sermon is not necessarily expected to be new and original: In Mecca, one of the preachers, the Mālikī Imam, even repeated in parts the sermon which had been delivered a few days earlier. According to Ibn Jubayr, despite the repetition, the preacher succeeds in touching the hearts of the congregation by delivering the sermon in a humble and modest way.[75] Although the extemporaneous sermon is considered ideal the prevalence of sermon collections speaks a different language: Model sermons could be – and have been – copied and presented in various contexts.[76]

In his report on one of the discourses of Ibn al-Jawzī cited above, Ibn Jubayr admires the oratory capacities of the famous preacher who refers in his discourse to each Qur'anic verse recited by the readers: "If anyone present at his sermon had thought to name what was recited verse by verse in the proper order he would have failed. What of the one who fits them rapidly and extemporarily to a fine

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72 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 159.
73 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 187.
74 See e.g. Broadhurst, *Travels*, 92.
75 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 157.
76 Cf. also Sabine Dorpmüller: "'Und Er goß aus das Wasser in Strömen.' Eine Nilpredigt von Ibn Nubāta al-Ḫaṭīb?", in: *Alltagsleben und materielle Kultur in der arabischen Sprache und Literatur. Festschrift für Heinz Grotzfeld zum 70. Geburtstag*, Thomas Bauer and Ulrike Stehli-Werbeck, eds, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2005, 137-162.

sermon!"[77] The fact that Ibn al-Jawzī delivers his sermon extemporaneously is exceptional in the eyes of Ibn Jubayr and proves the Ḥanbalī preacher to be a distinguished orator. This is substantiated by his report on the discourse of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī in Medina: "He then launched upon a sermon of his own composition that was of bewitching eloquence […]"[78]. The statement hints towards the fact that it was more common to copy sermons from earlier models and it was only exceptionally talented preachers that presented sermons of their own extemporaneously. Referring to his own books in the category of *waʿẓ* Ibn al-Jawzī writes: "When the preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) is endowed with innate talent and intelligence and devotes himself to a memorization of these books which we have just mentioned, he will acquire the ability to compose [exhortations] similar to these and will be able to utter the like of these extemporaneously."[79] To stress his own authority and unique talent, Ibn al-Jawzī adds:

> But as for myself I see only the excellence of the One who has made possible these achievements, […]. Most assuredly it was He who empowered me to speak extemporaneously for entire meetings without having to have recourse to what I had memorized. Sometimes as many as fifteen verses [from the Quran] were recited in my presence at these meetings, following which I would immediately deliver a *khuṭba* relevant to each of the verses.[80]

Ibn Jubayr was also impressed by Ibn al-Jawzī's recital of poetry as part of his discourse: verses of love poetry meant to intensify the desire and set afire hearts with passion appear to our traveller in this context rather like ascetic poetry (*zuhd*) and are used by Ibn al-Jawzī to stir up emotions and incite fear of God.[81]

> Where is my heart which love hath melted?
> Where is my heart not yet restored?
> O Saʿd increase my passion with memories of them,
> Tell me, by Allah, O Saʿd, hast thou been redeemed (from the miseries of separation)?
>
> Unceasingly he repeated these verses, his emotion visible upon him, tears almost preventing the issue of words from his mouth, until we feared he would be choked. He hastened to rise and descended from the pulpit speedily, but in a haze. He had inspired hearts with fear and left men on burning colas. They accompanied him with red eyes, openly weeping, and some were rolling in the dust. Oh what a sight![82]

After his recital of verses of love poetry Ibn al-Jawzī seemed to be so agitated that he nearly fainted. Then, he quickly descended the pulpit leaving his congregation dissolved in tears: "He had inspired hearts with fear and left men on burning coals. The accompanied him with red eyes, openly weeping, and some were rolling in the

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77 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 230; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 199.
78 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 208.
79 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣāṣ*, 233.
80 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣāṣ*, 234.
81 "There is no objection to the recitation of lines from ascetic poetry (*zuhdīyāt*), for in poetry [of this kind] there is a restraining wisdom (*ḥikma*)" (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣāṣ*, 224).
82 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 232.

dust. Oh what a sight! How awesome to look upon! How happy was he who saw it!"[83]

The report on the congregation's reaction shows us how Ibn Jubayr frames the inward transformation and outward action of the audience of preaching performances. The most important terms for his description of the preachers' discourses are *tadhkīr* ("exhortation") and *waʿẓ* ("admonition"). Ibn al-Jawzī defines both terms as follows: "As for *tadhkīr*, it consists of informing mankind of the blessing God has bestowed upon them, urging them to render thanks to him and warning them lest they disobey him. *Waʿẓ*, on the other hand, consists of the instilling of fear that softens the heart."[84] The account of the preaching event on 25th of Ramadan in Mecca may suffice as an example of how Ibn Jubayr, on several occasions, phrases his report on a sermon using both termini side by side: *wa-l-mawʿiẓa ablagha wa-l-tadhkira anfaʿa*, "his exhortations were more eloquent and his pious recollections more profitable".[85]

A successful and convincing sermon, as we learn from Ibn Jubayr, is characterized by eloquence, precise language, and learned discourse and can be found in preachers of Khorasan: *al-siḥr al-ḥalāl min al-bayān, faṣīḥ al-manṭaq, bāriʿ al-alfāẓ*, "lawful magic of rhetoric, an eloquence of language, and a distinction of expression",[86] *taṣarrafa fī asālīb al-waʿẓ wa-afānīn min al-ʿilm bi-l-lisānayn*, "employing all forms of exhortatory expositions and dealing with all branches of knowledge, using both languages [Arabic and Persian]".[87] Similarly, the sermon by a preacher in Tanta is praised by Ibn Jubayr for being *balīgh* ("eloquent") and *jāmiʿ* ("comprehensive").[88]

Again, Ibn Jubayr describes his admiration for a preacher of Khorasan for his broad knowledge and outstanding intellectual discourse:

> Throughout all this he was assailed by the arrows of interrogation, and these he met with the shield of ready and exhaustive reply, so that minds were ravished by him, and spirits were possessed with wonder and admiration for him. It was as if he was by God inspired. In this manner the preacher of these eastern lands meet their inquisition and the copious shower of questions that fall upon them. It is a remarkable performance that very clearly revealed their rare qualities and expresses the enchantment of their discourse; and this not in on single branch of learning but in many. At times men would seek to confuse and distract them with question, but they would give their answer with the speed of lightning, and in the twinkling of an eye.[89]

Even intellectually and linguistically sophisticated sermons seem to have been well received by the audience since we find no incident of complaint in this re-

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83 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 232; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 199.
84 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣāṣ*, 97.
85 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 129; Broadhust, *Travels*, 153.
86 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 159; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 186.
87 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 159; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 187.
88 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 18.
89 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 187; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 159.

gard: "The way that Ibn Jubayr characterized what he saw, it seems as though there were no language barrier between the clergy and lay people of Islam."[90]

Concerning the style of sermonizing, Ibn Jubayr shows his preference for a humble, calm and dignified presentation: *wa-btadaʾa khuṭbatahu bi-sakīna wa-līn wa-lisān ʿalā ḥālat al-ḥiyāʾ mubīn fa-kaʾanna al-ḥāl ʿalā ṭufūlatihi kānat awqar min al-ūlā*, "and then began his sermon, calmly and with gentleness, in language of transparent modesty. Considering his youth, it was graver than the first."[91]

We find a similar phrasing in the report on al-Qazwīnī in Baghdad*: fa-khaṭaba khuṭbat al-sukūn wa-waqār*, "he delivered a quiet and grave sermon". Ibn Jubayr characterizes the preaching style as learned, grave, quiet, persuasive, and full of blessings. The preacher succeeds in leaving the souls pacified and making them fly in humility, and tears pour forth.[92]

Another preacher in Cairo succeeds in having the desired effect on the audience: *wa-yulaṭṭifu al-waʿẓ wa-yuraqqiqu al-tadhkīr ḥattā takhashshaʿa al-qulūb al-qāṣiya wa-tatafajjara al-ʿuyūn al-jāmida*, "he discoursed so sweetly and gave so moving a sermon as to humble the hardest heart and cause the tearless eye to flow".[93]

First and foremost, it is humbleness that for Ibn Jubayr constitutes the desired effect of the sermon and the intended inward transformation of the listener. The outward actions of the audience in a sermon could be confessions of repentance, outcries, tears, and the offering of forelocks. Parts of the congregation in some cases even faint and cover themselves with dust. On 27th of Ramadan in Mecca the preacher achieved this aim, although many like Ibn Jubayr could not hear the sermon due to the large gathering of people: *wa-nufūsuhum qad istaṭārat khushūʿan wa-aʿyunuhum qad sālat dumūʿan*, "their spirits had taken wing from emotions and their eyes streamed with tears".[94] The sermon of the prayer for rain in Mecca witnessed by Ibn Jubayr also shows the desired interaction between preacher and congregation which confirms the success of the preaching event: *fa-khaṭaba khuṭba baligha wāliya fihā l-istighfār wa-waʿaẓa al-nās wa-dhakkarahum wa-khashshaʿahum wa-ḥaḍḍahum ʿalā l-tawba wa-l-ināba li-llāh ḥattā nazafat damʿahā l-ʿuyūn wa-stanfadat māʾuhā l-shuʾūn wa-ʿalā l-ḍajīj wa-rtafaʿa al-shahīq wa-l-nashīj*, "and delivered an eloquent sermon in which he combined prayers for their forgiveness of God, exhortations, and pious recollections, moving their souls and rousing them to repentance and a return to Great and Glorious God. The eyes of men ran dry of tears and their lachrymatory ducts were exhausted of water. Their cries rose high and loud were their sobs and chokings."[95]

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90 Bush-Joseph, *Ibn Jubayr*, 49.
91 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 129; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 159.
92 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 195; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 228.
93 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 24; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 42.
94 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 132; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 156.
95 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 138-139; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 164.

The reaction of the audience as described in the account of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī in Medina impresses Ibn Jubayr:

> He continued his exhortation until men's spirits were carried away in contrition and emotion. The Persians flung themselves upon him, declaring their repentance, their hearts enravished and the minds enraptured. They presented their forelocks to him, and, sending for a pair of scissors, he cut them one by one. He would place his turban on the head of one whose forelock had been cut, and straightway another turban would be put on his head, by one of his readers or companions who, knowing his generous habit, hastened to offer their own that they might acquire good repute for their manifest liberality. He continued to remove one turban after another from his head until he had removed a large number and cut many forelocks.

Ibn Jubayr finally comments: "I never saw a night of more tears and contrition than this."[96]

The rather dramatic display of repentance is especially obvious in the description of sermons in Baghdad – a fact which Ibn Jubayr attributes to the high quality of the local preachers. Hirschkind explains that listeners in general expect the same pleasure and cathartic experience from preaching performances as from music. Sermons thus serve as "an instrument of ethical therapy, both in the context of Friday worship at the mosque and outside it, in various formal and informal assemblies where preachers have been called on to enliven an audience's sense of pious fear through a hortatory […]."[97] "Listeners [to music] perform a range of affective responses involving facial, gestural, and postural elements, accompanied by vocal exclamations such as 'ah!' and '*ya salam*!' [how marvelous]. In doing so, the listeners both 'inspire the performer and enhance the effectiveness of the performance' […]."[98] A preacher, in accordance with this active listening, does not shape his audience at will but serves as a mediator, providing the linguistic and gestural resources through which the listeners can undertake the ethical labour involved in properly attuning their faculties to the word of God.

However, Ibn Jubayr also reports on preaching events that fail to establish the interaction between preacher and audience and that fail in their ambition to transform the audience. In the example of the young preacher who addresses a huge crowd in Mecca on 23rd of Ramadan, Ibn Jubayr describes the sermon as enchanting, but as failing to move the listeners: beauty alone does not suffice. Another performance that fails in his eyes is described as follows: "This preacher came with the ʿIraqi Emir, being delegated by the Caliph to deliver the sermon and to discharge the duties of Qadi in Mecca as it is said. His name is Taj al-Din. It became clear that he was dull and stupid; his discourse revealed this, and his speech did not observe the rule of grammatical analysis."[99] The preacher is obvi-

96 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 178-179; Broadhurst, *Travels*, 208-209.
97 Hirschkind, *Soundscape*, 37.
98 Hirschkind, *Soundscape*, 36.
99 Broadhurst, *Travels*, 184; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 156.

ously lacking sound education and knowledge which, next to his moral qualities, are considered the basic requirements for the office of a preacher.

In particular, one preaching event fills Ibn Jubayr with indignation, and he criticises it vehemently for being *bidʿa* (here heretical innovation): the preacher sits down after the first part of the sermon but is only willing to continue with the second part after his assistants have collected gold, jewellery, and precious garments. This unjustified personal enrichment in the guise of religion causes tears of outrage: "Enlightened men left weeping for religion, despairing of the happiness of the world, and assured of the portents of the Day of Judgement. To God belongs the future and the past."[100]

To sum up, Ibn Jubayr's travelogue provides the reader with a detailed and lively picture of preaching events in the late 12th century. The account shows the gifted author's skill at making things come alive in a pleasing writing style, "a pleasure never compromised by a determination to instruct", as Touati acknowledges. "The result is a new conception of the travel narrative."[101] Ibn Jubayr's *Riḥla* is, however, not only another pleasing travel account; it is also, as I hope to have shown, a rich source for the history of Arabic homiletics.

[100] Broadhurst, *Travels*, 211; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 179.
[101] Touati, *Islam & Travel*, 253.

Everyday Islamic Practice in Modern Egyptian Literature

Susanne Enderwitz

Literature is a repository for daily practices which would otherwise remain hidden from our eyes. The life of the common people is usually not very well documented, and it is even less accessible in historical terms. In most premodern societies, nobody cared about the preservation, let alone publication of documents, letters, diaries, notes or other records of individuals or families who were not considered to be historically important. The rediscovery of the 250.000 Cairo Geniza papers, in a nearly forgotten disposal site for cast-off documents from the 9th to the 13th centuries and beyond in a Cairene synagogue, was an absolutely spectacular exception to this rule, as it enabled scholars to study the daily practices of a Jewish community over a long period in considerable detail.[1] As the life of this community was not too different from the surrounding Muslim and Christian communities, the Cairo Geniza papers served as an important impetus for an intensification of the study of social history in the Middle East. In more recent years and in continuation of the interest in the history of "mentalities", the interest in writing "micro-history" with a focus on social history has significantly increased. Between 1996 and 2001, the European Science Foundation funded a series of conferences under the heading of "Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim World", the proceedings of which on topics like "Childhood and Youth", "Poverty and Wealth" or "Writing the Feminine" were afterwards published in no less than thirteen separate volumes.[2] Revaluating and extending issues which had already been addressed in the 1970s by the series of "Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conferences", these European conferences in turn successfully stimulated a renewed interest in the relationship between individual and society and the role of the individual in history.

With regard to contemporary societies, it is mainly ethnography which is concerned with the daily routines of the people. For the Middle East, an outstanding example is Unni Wikan's *Life among the poor in Cairo*,[3] which was based on empirical material collected in the period between 1969 and 1972 in the Old City of Cairo. This is but one title of a long list of fieldwork studies which cover

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1 S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1967.

2 Randi Deguilhem, ed., *Individu et société dans le monde méditerranéen musulman. Questions et sources*, Aix-en-Provence: Editions Paul Roubaud 1998.

3 Unni Wikan, *Life Among the Poor in Cairo*, London: Routledge Kegan & Paul 1978.

a whole range of communities between Morocco and Afghanistan.[4] However, fieldwork studies have, by definition, one thing in common, namely their "etical" ("outside", as opposed to the "emical") perspective. Methodologically, through his or her "participatory observation", the ethnographer remains an observer who tries to understand and describe the underlying basic functions of a given community, but neither criticizes them nor intervenes in them. Additionally, ethnographic studies reflect theoretical issues pertaining to their discipline, but since they look upon their object of study as an entity in itself, they usually do not communicate intertextually with each other. Clifford Geertz, in his *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, could be taken as an exception to this rule, as he confirmed his commitment to comparative studies in ethnography through his writings on Bali and Morocco, but in these studies he mainly communicated with himself in order to develop his famous "thick description" as a methodological tool for practising ethnography.[5]

Literature is different in both aspects, the participatory and the intertextual, as writers are usually committed to the development of their society and aware of other literary works at the same time. Moreover, as modern Arab literature has emerged since the 19th century, it also provides us with a historical perspective in itself. Arab literature is a documentary treasure for the lives of common people over more than a century, and it usually takes side with the aims and hopes of the people against the authorities. From its outset, Arab literature has served as a critical tool of the Arab people(s) for the people, thus distancing itself from those in power, be it in political, social or religious terms. The explanation for this feature lies in the fact that modern Arab literature emerged as a national literature, with its focus on the peasants, the working class, the poor, the marginalized, critical intellectuals or other manifestations of the national "self", excluding the ruling elite which was conceived of as having lost contact with the rest of society and as being uncritically westernized to the utmost degree. In this respect, Egypt displays the richest collection of literature which is, partly at least, due to the fact that Egypt was also the first Arab country to go in search of its national identity.

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4 This is not the place for a comprehensive list of ethnographic studies on the Near and Middle East; even for the above mentioned small field of research (Egypt/women/Islam), the following titles are but a selection: Fadwa El-Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement", *Social Problems* 28 (1981), 465-483; Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1986; Sherifa Zuhur, *Revealing Reveiling: Islamist Gender Ideology in Contemporary Egypt,* Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press 1992; Evelyn A. Early, *Baladi Women of Cairo: Playing with an Egg and a Stone*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Pub. 1993; Cynthia Nelson, *Situating Globalization: Views from Egypt*, Bielefeld: transcript 2000; Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005; Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Semons and Islamic Counterpublics,* New York: Columbia University Press 2006.

5 Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1971.

Therefore, I have taken my examples from Egyptian literature, starting with Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *al-Ayyām* (The Days) with its three parts (1929, 1940, 1967), and ending with ʿAlāʾ al-Aswānī, *ʿImārat Yaʿqūbiyān* (The Yaqoubian Building, 2002). Furthermore, my sample includes Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, *Qindīl Umm Hāshim* (The Lamp of Umm Hashim, 1943), Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *The Cairo Trilogy* with its parts *Bayn al-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), *Qaṣr al-shawq* (Palace of Desire) and *al-Sukkariyya* (Sugar Street) (1956/7), and ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim, *Ayyām al-insān al-sabʿa* (The Seven Days of Man, 1969). With a view to examining the most conspicuous religious themes in these five novels, I will treat them in a chronological order.

Between the publication dates of the first and the most recent of these novels, i.e. between 1929 and 2002 (more than sixty years), the question of the social impact of religion did not lose its relevance – on the contrary. For Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, religion was part of a cultural tradition which was, in one way or another, destined to give way to modern intellectual thinking and rational practice in the building of a new Egyptian society. For Najīb Maḥfūẓ, a quarter of a century later, religion was still part of the cultural tradition which was about to disappear in the near future. At the same time, Maḥfūẓ became aware of the growth of political Islam which, as he saw it, struggled with other ideologies, like communism, socialism, liberalism, capitalism or nationalism, for the attention and approval of the general public. Again, nearly fifty years later, in ʿAlāʾ al-Aswānī's novel which is set in the 1990s, political Islam is more alive than ever before. First and foremost it attracts the marginalized people of all former systems, Nasser's (national) socialism, Sadat's (turbo) capitalism, and Mubarak's corrupt continuation of elements of both. What unites the three authors and these with the two others, is the fact that they look upon religion as a vital social factor which sustains, helps or moves the ordinary people in their daily lives, for better or worse.

The modern Arab novel, from its very start, had a national or even nationalist agenda which made it susceptible to social realism. However, social realism became the hallmark of modern Arab literature only after some other experiments with form. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, who is often credited with having written the first fully fledged Egyptian novel, depicted the peasants as the personification of Egypt with a romantic spirit.[6] Haykal wrote *Zaynab* (Zaynab, 1913) while studying in Paris, where he had access to European romantic literature on the one hand and was homesick for his Egyptian fatherland on the other, which made his novel even more nostalgic. The next step was taken by Najib Maḥfūẓ who, in his beginnings and in the climate of still emerging Egyptian nationalism, chose Pharaonic subjects for his novels and planned a whole series of them. As in Haykal's vision the peasants, so in Maḥfūz' novels the Pharaonic Egyptians

[6] Shortly later, a current of romantic poetry emerged in Egypt, but it was rather escapist and unconcerned with national sentiments. For this romantic current, see Salma Khadra al-Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Arabic Poetry*, vol. 2, Leiden: Brill 1977, 361-362.

were designed to embody the Egyptian nation as distinct from the Arabs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other. But shortly afterwards, it was none other than Najīb Maḥfūẓ himself who deliberately and consciously committed himself to social realism, because he regarded it as the most suitable instrument for commitment in literature.[7]

In choosing a realistic writing mode, he followed in the footsteps of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn who had already displayed a kind of social realism, sometimes even merging it with an explicit ethnographic insistence on material culture in the first volume of his literary autobiography or autobiographical novel *al-Ayyām*. In this childhood account, he describes his early years among his parents and siblings, in the Qur'anic school (*kuttāb*) and in his native village in Upper Egypt. Like Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn focuses on the peasantry, but unlike his predecessor he completely lacks a romantic perspective. Religion, for him, provides a number of "professions" with which people gain their livelihood and acquire a social standing, be it as a school teacher, a reciter of the Qur'an or a jurisconsult. In a long introduction in which he outlines the traditional reverence of peasants for "knowledge", he depicts the rural society of his childhood as twofold, consisting of a given set of "scholars" and the others. Incidentally, this is also an account of a wide-ranging spectrum of religious affiliations within the Sunni field, in which a Ḥanafi scribe at the nearby Sharia-court coexists with the Shāfiʿī Imam of the mosque, a Mālikī merchant with his own circle and a local Shaykh of the Shādhiliyya brotherhood. The link between this rural "educated" class and the illiterate peasants in everyday life is represented by the teacher of the local *kuttāb*, the reciters of the Qur'an and a tailor with Sufi inclinations.

Blind from the age of seven, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn attended the *kuttāb* for a while, but his religious and intellectual education was mainly formed by the audible manifestations of Islam in his daily life. However, the five daily prayers and other rituals of Sunni Islam do not play a considerable role in his account, except for the generation of his grandfather, whose bigotry Ṭāhā mocks. More important and influential is the *mishmash* of religious tradition, traditional culture and the belief in magic, as becomes clear from the many impressions which render Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's book so exceptionally colourful. There are the dirges sung by his mother, sisters or other village women, the performances of professional storytellers from the epics of *ʿAntar*, *Ẓāhir Baybars* and the *Banū Hilāl*, the recitations from pious anthologies like the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* and from the Sunna of the Prophet.[8] All in all, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn presents Islam in the rural areas of Egypt at the

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7 Hartmut Fähndrich, *Nagib Machfus*, Munich: Edition Text und Kritik 1991, 65.

8 For the popular epics, see: Ludwig Arnold, ed. *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon*, 3rd ed., Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler 2009, vol. 15, 217-220 (with bibliography). The *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* (The Waymarks of Benefits) are a famous collection of prayers for the prophet Mohammed which were collected and composed by the Moroccan Sufi and Islamic scholar Muḥammad al-Jazūlī in the 15th century.

turn of the 20th century as a rich mixture of Sunni piety, folkloristic elements, superstitious convictions, magical incantations and mystical practices, the latter being presented as an especially obscurantist current. In fact, he compares the Sufi practices of his youth with the procedures of sorcerers and magicians who produce talismans and amulets as protection against the machinations of the Evil Eye, the jinn and other hostile beings. In his words: "The only difference between a sorcerer and a Sufi lies in the fact that the latter is in contact with the angels and the former with the devils."[9] The local Shādhiliyya branch is for him nothing but an ignorant swarm of greedy locusts, whose Shaykh and his entourage descend once a year upon the family on their annual tour through the villages of the district in order to consume all available food supplies.

Perhaps with a slightly less vitriolic but certainly no less critical vigour, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn depicts the local Sunni scholars and then the Cairene professors of al-Azhar. Regarding the local Sunnis, he inserts an exhaustive and gleeful description of the fear which befell them when news spread from Cairo that a comet was on its way to destroy the earth. The passage is an ample mockery of the traditional casuistic way in which Islamic scholars were used to solve legal problems in their recourse to the holy texts:

> They endlessly discussed matters. Some denied the possibility of this disaster, as it would run contrary to what was known as 'the provisions of the hour'. As everybody knows, the earth would only cease to exist after the apocalyptic animal, the fire and the Antichrist had appeared... Others believed that this disaster was in itself part of the 'provisions of the hour'... A third party said, the disaster would come true, but without destroying the earth in its entirety... So they discussed from dusk till dawn... gathered in the mosque... and repeated the Qur'anic verse: 'The Hour is coming; I would conceal it that every soul may be recompensed for its labours' [Q 20:15, Transl. Arberry – S.E.].[10]

In addition, Ḥusayn's criticism extends to the more erudite Azhar-scholars as well, as nearly the entire second part of *al-Ayyām* is devoted to a scornful depiction of the backward methods of teaching Islam at al-Azhar with which he was confronted after he had made his way from his native village to this traditional centre of higher Islamic learning. Unambiguously he describes his relief when Cairo's National University opened its doors in the year 1908 and enabled him to escape from the curriculum of al-Azhar with its learning by heart the names of transmitters, commentators and other authorities. Cairo University, on the contrary, offered linguistic, historical and cultural studies and an atmosphere which invited students to discuss matters with their professors. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn who, right from the start, had been more interested in Arabic than in Islamic studies, found the milieu of the "tarbush" much more appealing than that of the "turban", and it was at Cairo University that he laid the foundation for his later studies at the Sorbonne in Paris. It can be claimed that throughout *al-Ayyām*, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn advocates a

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9 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *al-Ayyām* [1929], Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif 1992, 98.

10 Ḥusayn, *Ayyām*, 107-109.

radical modernization and presents religion in its current form as an obstacle for progress.

Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, in his *Qindīl Umm Hāshim,* displays a more moderate tone which, rightly or wrongly, could be interpreted as a plea for a more balanced relation between modernity and tradition including religion and personal faith. His novel (or, rather, novella) is situated in Cairo, but not in its metropolitan, modern and westernized quarters. The novel unfolds in the popular neighbourhood of Sayyida Zaynab which is a special place imbued with sanctity as it is built around a shrine which people believe to be the shrine of the Prophet's granddaughter (Sayyida Zaynab/Umm Hāshim). Sayyida Zaynab is a local centre which not only attracts the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, but also pilgrims who come to ask for help from the saint on matters like diseases, infertility or debts, and people from the surrounding area who seek medical care, the services of scribes and the supply of urban goods. The main protagonist of the story, Ismāʿīl, is deeply rooted in this neighbourhood, but his ophthalmological studies abroad plunge him into a severe life-crisis. After his return from England, he finds himself torn between his modern medical skills and traditional healing methods when he tries to treat the eye-disease of his fiancée, Fāṭima. His efforts in using modern healing methods are of no help in curing Fāṭima's gradual loss of sight, and his furious destruction of the saint's lamp whose oil is traditionally used for the treatment of eye-diseases alienates him from his people. Finally, he finds solace in combining his medical insights with the expectations of his clients: in the end, Fāṭima's eyesight is restored, and Ismāʿīl's surgery becomes a popular place, particularly for the poor. The ambitious ophthalmologist strips himself of his high-strung ideals, together with any expectations of wealth, and places himself at the service of those in need.

Using a literary style which mimetically mirrors the daily life, the language and thoughts of the ordinary people who live in Sayyida Zaynab, Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī identifies himself with their cause, but still the question of whether he is a modernist or not remains. The ending of the story, when Ismāʿīl, having come to terms with the contradictions between tradition and modernity, hedonistically indulges in food, cigarettes and women, can be read as a subscription to the *conditio humana*. All in all, the text seems to tell its readers that modernisation is possible and perhaps even desirable, but please refrain from overdoing it.[11]

However, this is not the only or, at least, not the whole message which Ḥaqqī conveys to his audience, as his text suggests the familiar image of the doctor who

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[11] Arnold, *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon*, vol. 7, 77. However, the ending of the novel remains ambiguous and has provoked different and even contradictory readings. Cf. Muhammad Siddiq, *Arab Culture and the Novel: Genre, Identity and Agency in Egyptian Fiction*, London: Routlege 2007, 110, who reads the ending as an optimistic conclusion, and Muhsin al-Musawi, *Islam on the Street: Religion in Modern Arabic Literature*, Landham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2009, 57, who interprets it as resigned in outlook. *Qindīl Umm Hāshim* is, in fact, not the only example whose "message" Siddiq and al-Musawi read differently.

is in need of medicine himself. There is not only Ismāʿīl, but a second protagonist in the story, and this is the place and space of Sayyida Zaynab. It is introduced in the very beginning by the narrator who, being a nephew of the hero, indicates that his portrait of Sayyida Zaynab spans three generations:

> My grandfather, still a young man at that time, moved to Cairo in order to make his living. It is hardly surprising that he found a house next to the mosque... There, he opened a shop and traded in cereals. In this way, our family lived in the shadow of the mosque and under its protection: Sayyida Zaynab's festivals were our festivals, and her visiting days were ours. The Muezzin of the mosque was our clock.[12]

Sayyida Zaynab is resistant to change from the beginning until the end of the text and over the whole period in which, in view of the fact that Ḥaqqī wrote this story in the 1930s, Cairo underwent rapid modernisation. It is a self-contained space which, by virtue of the presence of the Islamic saint and her magical powers, is able to reintegrate its prodigal sons socially, economically and spiritually. During Ibrāhīm's stay in England, the place loses its magical spell on him and leaves him unprotected against materialism, scepticism and doubt, but after his return he is healed upon realising the fact that modernisation, progress and science come to nothing without faith.

More in accordance with Ṭāhā Ḥusayn than with Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, Najīb Maḥfūẓ was interested in the functions of religion rather than in the origins of faith, located them in human society rather than in divine revelation and focused on the mechanisms of power rather than on the holiness of places. For him, as for Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, there exists a correspondence between fear of the omnipotent God and the patriarchal father, although the setting of their respective stories is different. Ḥusayn depicts a household of peasants in a village in Upper Egypt, whereas Maḥfūẓ tells the story of a merchant's household in the old city of Cairo. Nevertheless, in *Bayn al-qaṣrayn*, Sayyid ʿAbd al-Jawwād's presence is as frightening for every member of his family, as is the presence of Ḥusayn's nameless father in *al-Ayyām*. In particular, the sons feel scared in the presence of their father and tremble with respect for all he has to say, as is shown by a short paraphrase of a painfully extended description of the daily breakfast ritual in chapter four of the novel.

Amīna, the mother, calls the family to breakfast in the dining room. Her husband, ʿAbd al-Jawwād, enters first and sits down, cross-legged, on the long side of the cloth on which the dishes are placed. Then the sons enter and take their positions: Yāsīn, the eldest, to the right side of his father, Fahmī to his left and Kamāl, the youngest, on the opposite side. The brothers act politely, carefully and submissively towards their father, heads lowered as if in prayer. None of them dares to look at the father, to speak up or to address one of the others, although Yāsīn is already grown-up and Fahmī a student at the university. Laughing is forbidden as it

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12 Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, *Die Öllampe der Umm Haschim. Eine Erzählung* (Arabic-German) [1943], Berlin: Edition Orient 1981, 6-9.

would be immediately followed by severe reprimands, slaps in the face or kicks from the father. The brothers meet their father only for this short daily breakfast, as he usually divides his time between his work at his office and his pleasures at a night-club, but they suffer from this permanently stressful situation. After breakfast, when the father leaves the house and returns to his daily routine, everybody feels a deep sense of relief. In Maḥfūẓ' words:

> The landlord had finished with his coffee. He stood up and dressed in front of the mirror... When he was content with what he saw, he reached out and asked Amīna for the bottle of eau-de-cologne... When the smell had spread throughout the house, everybody knew that the landlord was about to leave. Admittedly, their hearts felt a sense of relief at this release, comparable to the relief of a prisoner who hears the thundering of the chains when they are taken off his hands and feet. Everybody in the house became aware of the fact that he would be free in a short time and would be allowed to speak, laugh, sing and walk around.[13]

In this tightly knit system of authority and subordination, there is no need for intermediaries between the mundane and the divine, like religious scholars, the mosque or al-Azhar university. The *pater familias* derives his authority directly from God, and the only consequence of the fact that he is a sinner in his consumption of alcohol and visits to prostitutes is the occasional appearance of the marginal figure of a poor and slightly insane Dervish who, from time to time and when they meet incidentally, has a serious talk with him. On the other hand, ʿAbd al-Jawwād knows and accepts his responsibilities as *pater familias* as he cares for the well-being of his family and provides his sons with a good education and his daughters with respectable husbands. The value of this intact system becomes visible when the father is contrasted with his eldest son, Yāsīn, who only seeks the pleasures of his patriarchal status, but is unwilling or unable to assume its responsibilities.

The patriarchal system with the *pater familias* in the centre, as Maḥfūẓ describes it in *Bayn al-qaṣrayn*, is the clear and stable viceregency of God on Earth which, like God's omnipotent and productive act of creating Earth, brings about its own inferior copy. The inferior part is left to the women (and children) with their belief in holy shrines, magic rituals and superstitious practices. The religious reality of ʿAbd al-Jawwād is defined as rigid, scriptural and public, whereas the religious world of Amīna is bound to saints, jinn and the household. The two religions meet only rarely, and whenever they do, as on the occasion of a secret visit of Amīna to the shrine of the Ḥusayn mosque, where she collides with a carriage and is injured, then the religion of the father gets the upper hand. Upon hearing that Amīna has transgressed the boundaries of a good housewife, as she has left the house against his declared will, ʿAbd al-Jawwād's response is to divorce her and only hesitatingly take her back.

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[13] Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Bayn al-qaṣrayn* [1956/7], Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr n.d., ch. 4, 21-26, here 25. A similar relief, downsized to rural conditions, is expressed by Ḥusayn, *Ayyām*, 10.

However, the unfolding of Maḥfūz' novel in *Qaṣr al-shawq* and *al-Sukkariyya* leads to a point from which the authority of the father dwindles, and with it dwindles the impact of religious tradition. This is already foreshadowed in *Bayn al-qaṣrayn* by the fact that none of ʿAbd al-Jawwād's three sons is able or willing to carry on the torch of the patriarchal system. Yāsīn has inherited only his father's bad and not his good habits, Fahmi is shot dead during a national demonstration against the British, and Kamāl, the hero of the *Trilogy* and Maḥfūẓ' fictional alter ego, refrains altogether from establishing a household of his own. The real clash between the traditional system and the modern spirit takes place between ʿAbd al-Jawwād and Kamāl, and with it all the old certainties about religion, family and society are shattered. But before Kamāl turns into the intellectual counter-voice of his family, he starts out as an escapist. Having been brought up with the authoritarian regime of his father and the folkloristic education of his mother, he rejects both of them and seeks refuge in the religion of love. Here, Kamāl echoes an early stage of Maḥfūẓ' own intellectual development to which he once alluded in an interview. "In my generation", he said, "the worlds of men and women were still strictly separated. A meeting between the two was virtually impossible. We only knew the romantic love, a love without direct contact, the typical crazy Arab love as depicted in the story of Laylā and Majnūn. This was a love from a distance, and the energies stemming from those strong emotions were cast into literature and love-poems."[14] This love, which is not derived from the European Romantic movement, but from one of its own sources in medieval Arab literature, the *ʿUdhrī-* (or "Asra" in Heinrich Heine's terms) movement of early Islamic times, lends its wings to young Kamāl, too. Around his beloved ʿĀʾida, he develops a counter-religion which includes the "monotheistic" creed "there is no equal to my adored one" (*maʿbūdatī ʿalā ghayri mithāl*), a direct parallel to the actual Qur'anic sentence "there is nothing equal to Him" (*laysa ka-mithlihi shayʾ*, Q 42:11). Kamāl, as the omniscient author tells his readers, even tries to create a second Qur'an with love as its central creed, but unfortunately his mistress turns out to be thoroughly human. Therefore, in a second step, he abandons his religious feelings altogether. He leaves the irrational for the rational and instead subscribes to the teachings of Darwin and the theory of evolution.

Kamāl publishes an article on Darwin's theory in the Wafdist weekly *al-Balāgh*, whereupon he enters into a fierce debate with his father, who accuses him of being a heretic. While his father is still accusing him of denying the creation of mankind, Kamāl escapes into a stream of consciousness in which he recapitulates his journey from belief to unbelief: "Why had he written this article? He had hesitated for a long while before he sent it to the journal. It was as if he felt the need to publicly announce the death of his creed (*ʿaqīda*)... I am not an unbeliever (*kāfir*), I still be-

14 In: *Die Zeit*, 21.10.1988.

lieve in God. But religion? Where is religion? Gone!"[15] Shortly after, Kamāl decides to continue along the path he has already taken: "His emancipation from religion will bring him closer to God than his belief (*īmān*). True religion is nothing but science, the key to the hidden mysteries of the universe and its sublimity. If the prophets were sent on their mission today, they would preach nothing but science."[16] Protagonist and author merge into one person, as Najīb Maḥfūẓ indeed firmly believed that science would become the new religion and the basis for social, political and cultural progress.[17] He did not stand alone in this conviction, but in the tradition of the preceding generation of Egyptian intellectuals, including Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Faraḥ Anṭūn, Salāma Mūsā and others.

Obviously influenced by Najīb Maḥfūẓ' realistic novels, but more experimental than Maḥfūẓ, ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim set out to write his own (and again semi-autobiographical) version of a young protagonist, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who, from his adolescence on, slowly but steadily distances himself from his family, including his father, and his religion. *Ayyām al-insān al-sabʿa* has seven chapters which symbolize the seven days in which God created Heaven and Earth, but also the week which proceeds the annual celebration of Sayyid Badawī's Feast[18] in Tanta (Lower Egypt) and the years which turn an adolescent boy into a young man. From day to day, from chapter to chapter, the boy becomes increasingly aware of the world around him and transgresses its borders, firstly when he goes to the elementary school in his village, then to the secondary school in Tanta and finally to university in Cairo.

ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim's novel[19] does not only formally differ from Najīb Maḥfūẓ' chronological narrative which is embedded in an account of Egypt's recent history, including the opposition against the British, the ups and downs of the Wafd and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. In organizing his chapters along the cyclical chain of events on the annual pilgrimage to Tanta (The Gather-

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15 Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Qaṣr al-shawq* [1956/7], Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, n.d., ch. 33, 343-350, here 347.

16 Maḥfūẓ, *Qaṣr*, 350.

17 In his famous allegorical novel, *Awlād ḥāratinā* (The Children of our Alley), which is also staged in the Old City of Cairo, Maḥfūẓ explicitly addresses the relations between society, religion and science. In his own life, he oscillated between his firm belief in scientific rationalism and a thirst for a personal God. While religion was at the core of his novel writing, he usually tried to evade the issue in interviews.

18 Aḥmad al-Badawī, probably born in Fez in 1199/1200, is the most popular saint of Muslims in Egypt. His genealogy was traced back to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and as a Sufi he was called *al-Quṭb* (the pole). At the age of thirty, Aḥmad underwent an inner transformation, by which he retired from men, became taciturn and made himself understood with signs. A vision told him to go to Tanta. After having arrived, he climbed a roof and stood there motionless for about forty days. Even the ruler of Egypt is said to have been deeply impressed by his holiness. Aḥmad al-Badawī is the author of several prayers and a spiritual testament, but more than his intellectual qualities, it is the support of the Sultans of Egypt which seems to have helped him to be venerated as a saint for about 700 years. See Karl Vollers and Enno Littmann, "Aḥmad al-Badawī", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 1, Leiden: Brill 1979, 280a-281b.

19 ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim, *Ayyām al-insān al-sabʿa* [1969], Cairo: Dār al-shurūq 2005.

ing, The Baking, The Journey, The Service, The Night, The Farewell, The Path) and counteracting it with the linear narrative of is protagonist's upbringing, Qāsim seems less interested in the relation between politics and society and more so in the divide between the rural and urban worlds. There are the peasants, whose acts and duties vary only according to the change of the seasons, and whose work is based on an endless repetition of ploughing, sowing and harvesting and whose life is conceived as following the same inescapable sequence of youth, adulthood and death. On the other hand, there is the city promising knowledge, adventure and fame for an individual who is apt and willing to seize the opportunity. Although the setting and, thus, also the branch of Islam depicted in each novel – strictly Sunni in Maḥfūẓ' novel, Sufi in Qāsim's work – differ, the general orientation of both novels is the same. A son distances himself from his father and his beliefs, and with the death of the father religion also dies, giving way to a belief in science and the rationality of the world. The similar outlook of Maḥfūẓ and Qāsim or, rather, their intellectual affinity goes even deeper, as both authors display a certain sadness or underlying melancholia on behalf of their protagonists' disillusions which they, at the same time, conceive of as unavoidable.

But contrary to ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim and, again, in line with his own interest in the political and social history of Egypt, Najīb Maḥfūẓ pushed his narrative further and included the rise of Islamism in the 1930s and 40s as one of the main topics in *al-Sukkariyya*. In the novel, the void which is left by God's and the father's death is filled by two modern ideologies (as social philosophies or political activisms) which fight against each other. These are the Muslim Brotherhood on the one hand and the Communist Party on the other, embodied by two brothers of the family saga's third generation, ʿAbd al-Munʿim and Aḥmad. It is interesting to note that, in the *Trilogy*, as in other novels by Maḥfūẓ, the sympathies of the author are clearly with the left-wing rather than with the religious brother.[20] On the whole, the religious brother is no real match for the secular one. Through the unfolding of the plot, it becomes clear that the communist brother stands for the present, whereas the religious brother represents the past. The communist has not only the better arguments, he also has a better character than the religious brother. This difference is even inscribed in the Muslim brother's short and stumpy stature, which perhaps echoes the inclination of some Egyptian intellectuals in the first half of the 20th century towards eugenics.[21] Concerning political action, the Mus-

[20] The following observation is taken from Rasheed El-Enany's "The Dichotomy of Islam and Modernity in the Fiction of Naguib Mahfouz", in: *The Postcolonial Crescent: Islam's Impact on Contemporary Literature*, John Charles Hawley, ed., New York: Peter Lang 1998, 71-83.

[21] Eugenics, a set of beliefs and practices that aims at improving the genetic quality of the human population, was lastingly discredited by the Nazi eugenics laws and the practice of euthanasia and genocide. In the 1920s, however, it was still an academic discipline receiving funding from many different sources. In these years and even after, it was also emphatically received and propagated as a means to create a new man and a better society by some Egyptian intellectuals like Salāma Mūsā (1887-1958).

lim brother indulges too much in violent attacks, and the same is true on the personal level. The Muslim brother is less refined, lacks humour and has the tendencies of a bigot, and proof of all this is in the two brothers' respective treatment of the women they love. The religious brother dismisses the girl who is in love with him because she is willing to surrender to his sexual wishes, whereas the secular brother marries his girlfriend in spite of the fact that he knows he is not the first man in her life.

In the generation following ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim, and after nearly half a century had elapsed since Najīb Maḥfūẓ' assessment of the Muslim Brothers as an important political force, ʿAlāʾ al-Aswānī composed *ʿImārat Yaʿqūbiyān*[22] as a panorama of Egyptian society whose setting was once again urban Cairo. It is not Maḥfūẓ' Old City in which the novel unfolds, but *Wusṭ al-balad* (downtown Cairo) in the early 1990s. The story goes back to the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and is, at the same time, a parable of contemporary Cairo. The novel which was published less than ten years before Mubarak's fall presents a Cairene society which has reached its final stage. Its aristocratic section is nearly dead, the bourgeoisie is approaching its end, corruption prevails in the (civil and military) administration, the ideals of the revolution have long been abandoned, and only the beneficiaries of the Sadat and Mubarak eras profit from the system, while the masses or marginalized people have lost all hope of a decent life. Islam, in its politicized form, exists in two variants, one serving the government, the other fighting it. In this desolate socio-political climate, the Islamist soul-winners have their share, as they attract many of those who realize that they are the losers of the system. The central figure is an Islamist Shaykh, a powerfully eloquent man who rouses the masses against the government and tries to recruit jihadists from among the young, marginalized and poor people.

Such a young, marginalized and poor man is the protagonist of the whole story, but it goes without saying that he is neither a "hero" nor an "anti-hero" in the common understanding of the word – he is no hero at all. Whereas each of the other four novels presents a young hero who leaves his community or struggles against it and, finally, overcomes all obstacles which have – socially, economically, psychologically – prevented his educational self-fulfilment, this time it is different. Ṭāhā, the son of the janitor of the "Yaʿqubiyan Building", fails to get access to the police academy, not because he is not intelligent enough, but because he does not have enough money to pay all the necessary bribes. In his desperate situation, he turns to the Islamists and becomes a would-be terrorist who is finally shot by the police.

In a long passage which comes close to what could be labelled a historical excursus, al-Aswānī recapitulates the reasons for the resurgence of the Islamists starting in the 1970s. An extended sermon of the Shaykh serves to illustrate their

22 ʿAlāʾ al-Aswānī, *ʿImārat Yaʿqūbiyān* [2002], Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 2005.

arguments: Islam has been corrupted by the government which, for its own benefit, encourages gambling, drugs and prostitution. Instead of the Sharia, French law prevails which favours alcohol abuse, adultery and perversion. Even worse than in France, the ruling clique bases its government on electoral fraud, incarceration and the torture of innocent people. The Shaykh ends his sermon with a Qur'anic quotation: "A monstrous word it is, issuing out of their mouths; they say nothing but a lie [Q 18:5, Transl. Arberry – S.E.]". As this Qur'anic passage in its original context is directed against the pagans, the Jews and, particularly, the Christians, it equates the Egyptian government with the French or the West in general. The meaning of such an equation is clear: it turns those in power not only in to liars and debauchers, but in to apostates who have forfeited their right to exist. Islam, in this understanding, is turning its back on everything dear to Egyptian culture over the past hundred years: the history of ideas, scientific progress, reformist Islam, social justice, nation-state rule, secular ideology and, last but not least, literary culture.[23]

And yet, the political, ideological and religious coordinates are not as socially deterministic as Ṭāhā's choice for his self-sacrifice might suggest. The reasons why Ṭāhā, contrary to his precursors in Ṭahā Ḥusayn's, Najīb Maḥfūẓ' and ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim's novels, opts for death instead of struggling through cannot fully be explained by the mechanisms of the system. Amidst all the corruption and cynical grease of the politicians, the military apparatus, the administration, the men of religion and the educational system, there is still a lively and colourful plurality of old aristocrats, liberals, businessmen, young women seeking their fortune and intellectuals or artists. This Egyptian society offers perhaps not more, but certainly no fewer alternatives to the career of an Islamic extremist than Egyptian society in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, the interwar period or the time of the Nasserist regime, which form the background of the other four novels. The difference between the novels lies, perhaps, not predominantly in the description of the Egyptian society as such, but in the depiction of its young generation and the perception of the author. This young generation is disoriented and seducible, and the author al-Aswānī looks at it with a sharp and analytical eye.

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For this reason and before concluding, we need to return to the authors and their ways of looking upon religion, as in their worldview lies an explanation for the shift from a young hero who climbs the social ladder thanks to his individual talents to a young loser who becomes prey to a politics of negation. From its beginnings, Egyptian literature was nearly completely secular in its outlook. None of the above mentioned writers was a self-proclaimed atheist, but at the same time their belief in rationality, science and progress was overwhelming. This is even true for

[23] Musawi, *Street*, 101.

those authors who, like Ṭahā Ḥusayn with *ʿAlā hāmish al-sīra* (Marginal notes to the biography of the prophet), approvingly responded to a wave of religiosity in the 1930s. They established a kind of religious literature which sought to bypass the ritual and legal tradition of Islam, to humanise the example of the prophet and to establish an understanding of religion as an act of individual faith.

Many of the authors retained or developed a sympathy for Sufism, but this was more an aesthetic than a religious commitment and well in line with the view of religion as a personal choice and as a private issue. Maḥfūẓ once made it quite clear that he rejected both the scriptural and the popular versions of Islam and accepted only an enlightened Islam: "I was introduced to religion in the form of rituals (*shakliyyāt*); I used to hear things that you might call myths (*asāṭīr*), until I finally chose the true essence of religion, which is to be exemplary (*mithāliyyan*) in his relation with others, and to yearn to know the truth."[24] The quest for a personal morality in the propagation of social justice corresponds to the world-view of an educated middle-class to which most of the Egyptian writers belonged. In creating a national literature, they wrote about the Egyptian people with the aim of writing also for them, but this was perhaps an illusion from the outset. At any rate, when the gap between the higher and the lower classes widened under Sadat and the growth of more intense or extreme forms of religiosity made itself conspicuously felt, the *bildungsroman* of the former generation as a narrative of education came to its end.[25]

For the next decades, Egyptian literature prominently ignored the new politico-religious groupings, as the battle cry "Islam is the solution" remained alien to the writers. When ʿAlāʾ al-Aswānī published his *ʿImārat Yaʿqūbiyān*, he was one of the first to break this silence, but he did it in a way and with an authorial voice which is still a continuation of his forerunners' firm belief in the feasibility of the world. He maintains their secular outlook, perhaps more than ever. If there is still some hope to be drawn from his novel, it stems from the - literally - reasonably happy marriage between the old bourgeoisie and the young generation, represented by the 65-year-old Zakī and the dewy maiden Buthayna.[26] With his novel, al-Aswānī is more the last representative of the modernists' generation of writers than the first example of the post-modern generation, whose epistemological, narrative and aesthetic rupture with the previous and prevalent narrative discourse Sabry Hafez has recently sketched.[27]

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[24] Quoted in Fawzi M. Najjar, "Islamic Fundamentalism and the Intellectuals: The Case of Naguib Mahfouz", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1998), 139-168, here 162-163.

[25] Musawi, *Street*, 37.

[26] Deborah A. Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt: Literature, Culture, and Empire*, New York: Routledge 2009, 43-47.

[27] Sabry Hafez, "The New Egyptian Novel: Urban Transformation and Narrative Form", *New Left Review* 64 (2010), http://newleftreview.org/II/64/sabry-hafez-the-new-egyptian-novel.

Part III
Negotiating Meaning, Aesthetics, and Identity

The Open Ritual: Indeterminacy in a Modern Sufi Ceremony

Jan Scholz / Max Stille

The ceremony[1] which forms the subject of this article[2] and which the authors observed in February 2010 in New Delhi is unusual in many ways. Members of 'Universal Sufism', a Western New Religious Movement, from North America and Europe travel to one of the oldest and most important centres of North Indian Sufism. The occasion of this pilgrimage is the *ʿurs* of the founder of Universal Sufism, a movement which is popular in the 'West' but has hardly any adherents in India. As the Western pilgrims not only adopt rituals from North Indian Sufism but also perform their own, this transcultural ceremony brings rituals to the 'Islamic' neighbourhood of Nizamuddin in New Delhi which have evolved in the context of the New Religious Movement of Universal Sufism and which clearly differ from the rituals usually performed in Nizamuddin. However, for the *ʿurs* ceremony, the Western pilgrims also adopt elements from a North Indian Sufi ritual tradition which is significantly different from their own ritual practice. The article argues that a description of this ceremony can benefit from insights developed in literary theory as this connection allows a focus on significant aspects of the ceremony's structure. The use of literary theory in the field of ritual studies, furthermore, touches on important questions such as the aesthetic functioning of modern ritual, the meaning *of* ritual and meaning *in* ritual, and communication in ritual.

The article is structured in the following way: firstly, the history of Universal Sufism is briefly introduced and the ceremony is situated in its Indian context; secondly, the theoretical approach which we draw from literary reception theory is outlined; thirdly, a brief overview of the whole ceremony celebrated on the occasion of the *ʿurs* (lit. wedding, anniversary of the death a Sufi saint 'marrying' God) is provided and the use of literary theory for the ceremony's analysis is illustrated by reference to four rituals which were performed during the ceremony. The next section will reflect upon the various kinds of indeterminacy discussed

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1 'Ceremony' is the Universal Sufis' term which we understand as denoting the sum of the different 'rituals' or 'ritual elements' that were performed on the *ʿurs* day.

2 The authors are indebted to the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes e.V. whose support enabled them to conduct their field research. An earlier version of this article has been published online as Jan Scholz and Max Stille, "One Ceremony, Many Readings – Inayat Khan's ʿurs and its Participants", in: *South Asia's Islamic Shrines and Transcultural Visuality*, Christiane Brosius, Yousuf Saeed, eds, 2014 (kjc-sv006.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/visualpilgrim/demo/essay-detail.php?eid=33), containing also short embedded videos. This article was written in 2013 and has not since been updated substantially.

in the examples and relate them to the concept of 'connotation'; in the fifth part we look at the perspective structure brought about by these indeterminacies and, finally, situate the chosen theoretical approach in the field of ritual studies, particularly in relation to theories concerning the meaning of rituals.

1. Universal Sufism in Nizamuddin

The ceremony in question is the *ʿurs* of Inayat Khan[3], the Indian-born founder of the modern Sufi movement called 'Universal Sufism'[4], which he spread after his migration to the USA in 1910 and which developed into a typical example of a New Religious Movement founded by an Asian spiritual teacher who had migrated to the West.[5] Upon his arrival in the USA, Inayat Khan eventually took the pragmatic but significant decision to untie Sufism and Islam. This is still manifest: although there are considerable efforts within the movement to link it to elements of Islamic Sufi traditions,[6] the modern option of "Sufism without Islam"[7] remains strong. For many of its adherents, Universal Sufism's theology is primarily about an equivalence of all religions, an idea common to many religious streams which are influenced by theosophical ideas. Another typical feature of Universal Sufism which links it to other Asian-inspired New Religious Movements in the West is its close connection with the hippie movement during the 1960s which had a particularly strong influence in the case of the group called the 'Sufi Islamia Ruhaniat Society' (nowadays 'Sufi Ruhaniat International'), whose founder Samuel Lewis is quoted as having said: "Allah came to

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3 For the transliteration of ʿInāyat Khān we employ the common English spelling used by the Universal Sufis.

4 We use this umbrella term for the many disparate groups which claim to uphold the legacy of Inayat Khan. These include the 'Sufi Order' and the 'Sufi Movement', both of which have several branches and offshoots. The most comprehensive overview of the history and development of these movements is provided by the doctoral thesis of the current leader of the Sufi Order, Inayat Khan's grandson Zia Inayat-Khan, from Duke University, cf. Zia Inayat-Khan, *A Hybrid Sufi Order at the Crossroads of Modernity: The Sufi Movement and Sufi Order of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Chicago 2006. Cf. also Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2002, 140–143.

5 Celia A. Genn, "The Development of a Modern Western Sufism", in: *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, eds, London: Tauris 2007, 257-278, here 258.

6 Examples for which are Zia Inayat-Khan's work and the fact that his "succession was ceremonially reconfirmed in New Delhi in 2000", cf. Inayat Khan, *Sufi Order*, 6. Cf. also Celia A. Genn, "From Chishtiyya Diaspora to Transnational Sufi Movement", in: *Asia Reconstructed: Proceedings of the 16th Biennial Conference of the ASAA, 2006, Wollongong, Australia*, Adrian Vickers and Margaret Hanlon, eds, Canberra: Australian National University 2006, 1-11, here 4.

7 Carl Ernst: "Taṣawwuf", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 10, Leiden: Brill 2000, 313-340, here 337a.

me and said to me: 'I make you spiritual leader of the hippies.'"[8] Samuel Lewis also introduced one of the major ritual elements of Universal Sufism nowadays, the so-called 'Dances of Universal Peace', which could roughly be described as a combination of collective *dhikr* and 'Western roundel dance'[9] and which was also practised in New Delhi, on the evening before the *ʿurs* day at the *dargah* (shrine) of Inayat Khan by all pilgrims, and by the adherents of the Sufi Ruhaniat International in other places as well.

From this short historical sketch, important implications arise for the ceremony that the Universal Sufis, travelling from the USA and Europe, celebrate in New Delhi annually. The ceremony that took place in February 2010 was of particular importance as it marked the centennial anniversary of the movement's founder's migration to the USA. Inayat Khan's shrine is located in the quarter of Nizamuddin, an area named after the great 14th-century Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ whose shrine and followers still characterize the whole quarter, which is also home to many other Islamic groups, most prominently the *Jamāʿat-e Tablīgh*.[10] While Inayat Khan's *dargah* and the associated development project[11] are located in Nizamuddin, for most of the year there is only a very small presence of Universal Sufis in the quarter. The order's adherents live – with few exceptions – in North America, Europe and Australia and only come to Nizamuddin for the pilgrimage. Further, the Universal Sufis' understanding of Sufism stands out considerably in this context. To exaggerate this point for illustrative purposes, it could be said that the basic notion of Sufism in Nizamuddin would be that of a dimension of Islam, while the basic notion of Sufism for the Universal Sufis would be that of spirituality with an Islamic dimension. How does the ritual on Inayat Khan's *ʿurs* day reflect these different understandings? Even without a

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8 The account is cited from an interview with Shabda Kahn on Sufi Radio, KWMR Community Radio in Point Reyes, CA, July 2010, 8:40–8:44 min. The interview was downloaded from a link available on http://marinsufis.com/talks.php on 3rd November 2010, but is no longer available.

9 On the origin of the dances, Zia Inayat-Khan writes about the influences of older mystical concepts conveyed by his father Vilayat Inayat-Khan and the Mogul emperor Akbar: "Vilayat's expositions on the Pythagorean roots of dervish dancing inspired Lewis to develop a canon of 'occult dances.' He declared, 'Pir Vilayat is the father of these Dances. And I am the Mother.' But he also said that the impulse had originally come to him in a state of mystical absorption at the tomb of Salīm Chishtī in Fatehpur Sikri, the capital city founded by Akbar. The name he gave to this repertory of dances, 'The Dances of Universal Peace,' evidently derives from Akbar's motto *ṣulḥ-i kull* ('universal peace'). Beginning in the spring of 1969, Lewis 'began getting less and less sleep at night due to the increasing activity of his visionary consciousness,' producing an outpouring of new dances. In an era in which embodied and nonhierarchical forms of collective religious practice were in acute demand within the countercultural movement, the Dances attracted an enthusiastic and burgeoning following." Inayat-Khan, *Sufi Order*, 265.

10 Marc Gaborieau: "Tablīghī Djamāʿat", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 10, Leiden: Brill 2000, 38-39.

11 Genn, "Transnational", 5.

more detailed analysis, it is clear that the different rituals performed throughout the day were only partly familiar to the Western pilgrims. The above-mentioned Dances of Universal Peace, for example, were performed in New Delhi just as they were in the pilgrims' home countries. Obviously less well known were features such as *qawwālī* (i.e. devotional Sufi music typically performed at shrines in South Asia)[12] or the Islamic prayers which were included in the ceremony. How did the Western pilgrims deal with these unknown elements? Our argument indicates that the unknown elements did not disrupt the pilgrims' experience, but rather became a formative part of it. We propose to focus on the ceremony's structure by drawing on the literary theory of aesthetic response[13] as developed by the Constance School.

2. Indeterminacy and the ʿurs *ceremony*

The literary scholar Wolfgang Iser claims that the meaning[14] of a text is only created during its realization, which takes place in the act of reading.[15] That is to say that a text always offers various readings which are only concretised by the reader in his or her personal process of reading. Building on Roman Ingarden, who introduced the notion of 'spots of indeterminacy' into phenomenological theory, Iser speaks of 'gaps of indeterminacy' (*Unbestimmtheitsstellen*).[16] Indeterminacy

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[12] For an important study on *qawwālī* see the musicological approach in Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, Karachi, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006.

[13] Aesthetic response is Wolfgang Iser's translation of the German "*ästhetische Wirkung*". For his own reflections on the term's translation see the English version of Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*, Munich: Fink 1976: Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978, ix.

[14] In English, the German terms '*Sinn*' and '*Bedeutung*' are usually both translated as 'meaning'. Iser's own translations are 'meaning' and 'significance', and thus differ significantly from Max Black's translation of Frege's "Sinn und Bedeutung" as "Sense and Reference". This points to the general problem of possible variations in the employment of these philosophical terms by different authors. Here, as well as in our other quotations from Iser, 'meaning' corresponds to the German '*Sinn*'.

[15] For Iser's theory we draw on the above-mentioned monograph Iser, *Act* (*Akt*) as well as to his inaugural lecture, Wolfgang Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction", in: *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*, Wolfgang Iser, ed., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1989, 3-30, which is the translation of the German publication Wolfgang Iser, *Die Appellstruktur der Texte: Unbestimmtheit als Wirkungsbedingung literarischer Prosa*, Konstanz: Universitätsverlag 1970 (=Wolfgang Iser, "Die Appellstruktur der Texte: Unbestimmtheit als Wirkungsbedingung literarischer Prosa", in: *Rezeptionsästhetik: Theorie und Praxis*, Rainer Warning, ed., Munich: Fink 1975, 228-252). By 'Iser, *Appellstruktur*', we mean the first edition published in Constance.

[16] Iser's theory of indeterminacy has an important predecessor in Eco who has particularly emphasized the role of indeterminacy for modern poetics. See Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta: Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* [1962], 8th ed., Milano: Bompiani 2009 (English translation: Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University

arises from the fact that the reader can never fully identify the literary text with his or her prior experiences, be they real-life or literary.[17]

This indeterminacy – which is embedded in the text's structure – plays a crucial role in the process of reading. When reading a text the reader 'counterbalances' the text's indeterminacy in a process called the 'realization'[18] of the text by applying it – as far as possible – to his/her own standards. He/she 'pins down' the text's meaning in terms of his/her prior experiences (*Erfahrungshorizont*) which shape his/her horizon of expectation (*Erwartungshorizont*). Following Iser, the literary text thus has to be understood as "a hollow form into which the reader is invited to pour his own store of knowledge".[19] The text itself does not fix its meaning; rather the text is always capable of several different realizations, as it is characterized by open gaps which different readers fill in different ways.

A particularly relevant point for Iser – as well as for our use of his theory – is that indeterminacy leaves "room for the change of vision"[20] and allows the text's connectability to different dispositions.[21] This also implies performance: indeterminacy has to be regarded as "the fundamental precondition for reader participation"[22] and is therefore central to the text's aesthetic quality. Indeterminacy, performance and aesthetic quality are interlinked:

> [W]e can say that literary texts initiate 'performances' of meaning rather than actually formulating meanings themselves. Their aesthetic quality lies in this 'performing' structure, which clearly cannot be identical to the final product, because without the participation of the individual reader there can be no performance.[23]

Drawing on an analogy to the performance of meaning of literary texts, the present article argues that the participants of the ceremony in question created/performed their own meaning of the rituals by connecting the rituals to their own "store of knowledge"[24]. At the same time, this performance was not arbitrary but

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Press 1989. German translation: Umberto Eco, *Das offene Kunstwerk*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1977.) In this article, we concentrate on Iser but refer to Eco in parts four and six.
The related term '*Leerstelle*' has been employed in ritual studies by Burckhard Dücker who, however, uses the term in a completely different sense, i.e. for situations for which no ritual is organized, cf. Burckhard Dücker, *Rituale: Formen – Funktionen – Geschichte*, Stuttgart: Metzler 2007.

17 Cf. Iser, "Indeterminacy", 7.

18 Iser's own translation for the German term "*Normalisierung*" in his inaugural lecture is "counterbalancing" (Cf. Iser, *Appellstruktur,* 13 and Iser, "Indeterminacy", 8). The English term "realization" corresponds to the German "*Realisierung.*"

19 Iser, *Act*, 143 and Iser, *Akt*, 348.

20 Iser, "Indeterminacy", 10 and Iser, *Appellstruktur*, 16.

21 Iser, *Appellstruktur*, 13 and Iser, "Indeterminacy", 8. Note, however, that here the English translation differs from the German original.

22 Iser, "Indeterminacy", 10 and Iser, *Appellstruktur*, 16.

23 Iser, *Act*, 26 f. and Iser, *Akt*, 50. "'[P]erformances' of meaning" corresponds to "Sinnvollzüge", "'performing' structure" to "Vollzugsstruktur" and, again, "performance" to "Sinnkonstitution".

24 Iser, *Act*, 37 and Iser, *Akt*, 65.

prestructured by the ceremony – analogically to the reader's performance being prestructured by the literary text.

As is often done in ritual studies,[25] we apply the metaphor of text to the ceremony because, similarly to a text, the ceremony is composed of different elements which stand in meaningful relation to each other. Of course, the transposition of a theory of reading to ritual which is proposed here must acknowledge its limits. Concerning verbal utterances in rituals, the imaginative process can be similar to the one stimulated by literary texts, but it is of course significantly different in the case of non-verbal ritual acts.[26] Nevertheless, we argue that particularly in the case of the ceremony in question, imaginative faculties played a crucial role in the participants' experience and in the constitution of meaning of both the different elements and their composition.

The arrangement of the *ʿurs*-ceremony in question is characterized by 'gaps of indeterminacy'. The different rituals, i.e. the different elements the ceremony is composed of, are not meaningful in the same way to all participants. Some rituals are known to the Universal Sufis because they are also used to performing them in their home countries (e.g. the Dances of Universal Peace), and some are new to them.[27] The unknown elements are rituals regularly performed in North Indian Sufism, such as a *qawwāli* performance, a recitation of different Islamic prayers etc.

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25 Cf., for example, Lévi-Strauss' reflections on myth and ritual and further studies such as Frits Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual", *Numen* 26 (1979), 2-22; Hans H. Penner, "Language, Ritual and Meaning", *Numen* 32 (1985), 1-16; Axel Michaels, "'Le rituel pour le rituel' oder wie sinnlos sind Rituale?", in: *Rituale heute,* Corina Caduff and Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, eds, Berlin: Reimer 1999, 23-47; Axel Michaels, "'How do you do?': Vorüberlegungen zu einer Grammatik der Rituale", in: *Der Mensch – ein „animal symbolicum"?,* Heinrich M. Schmidinger and Clemens Sedmak, eds, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2007, 239-258; Axel Michaels, "The Grammar of Rituals", in: *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual,* vol. 1 *Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*, Axel Michaels, ed., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2010, 7–28; Karl-Heinz Kohl, "Die Syntax von Ritualen", in: *Liturgie, Ritual, Frömmigkeit und die Dynamik symbolischer Ordnungen*, Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, ed., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2006, 103-126. Of interest to this article are also Dietrich Harth's general reflections on ritual, text and discourse since Harth mentions Eco and the aspect of the openness of art, cf. Dietrich Harth, "Rituale, Texte, Diskurse: Eine formtheoretische Betrachtung", in: *Text und Ritual: Kulturwissenschaftliche Essays und Analysen von Sesostris bis Dada*, Burckhard Dücker and Hubert Roeder, eds, Heidelberg: Synchron, 2005, 19-48, here 26.

26 For Iser's description of the imaginative process in literary texts, cf. the chapter "Passive Syntheses in the Reading Process" (Iser, *Act*, 135-159), particularly the subsections "Mental images as a basic feature of ideation" (135-139), "Mental images affecting the reader" (139 f.), "Building images" (140-151) which are equivalent to the German chapter "Die passiven Synthesen des Lesevorgangs" (Iser, *Akt*, 219-256) and its subsections "Der Bildcharakter der Vorstellung" (219-225), "Der affektive Charakter des Vorstellungsbildes" (226 f.) and "Vorstellungsbildung" (228-245).

27 The Dances of Universal Peace are most common in the Ruhaniat branch of Universal Sufism, where they originated. As the ceremony united Universal Sufis from many branches, it is possible that some of the pilgrims practised the dances for the first time in New Delhi, while they most probably knew them from hearsay at least. For the majority of the pilgrims, however, the dances were well known.

Well-known rituals are (relatively) 'determinate' while unknown rituals are (relatively) 'indeterminate'. From this structure follows that those rituals which are determinate from the point of view of the Universal Sufis are mostly indeterminate from the point of view of the 'local' observers and vice versa: the elements which are determinate in the context of Nizamuddin are indeterminate for most of the Universal Sufis. The unknown or indeterminate elements have to be counterbalanced in each case. It is such unfamiliarity which, according to Iser, activates the reader: "If the text reproduces and confirms familiar norms, he may remain relatively passive, whereas he is forced into intensive activity when the common ground is cut away from under him."[28] It is argued here, that – corresponding to the reading of literary texts – such mental activity in different participants will lead to the creation of different meanings for the elements in question.

3. Examples from the ceremony

To locate the different examples within the ceremony, the *ʿurs* day itself can broadly be sketched as follows:

(1) The grave cover (*čādar*) is carried from Inayat Khan's shrine to the shrine of the great Chishtī saint Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ and placed on the latter's tomb; (2) in front of Niẓām al-Dīn's shrine Qurʾanic quotations and prayers in Arabic, Urdu and English are recited and transmitted via loudspeaker, and a *qawwālī* performance is put on; (3) the *čādar* is carried from the shrine of Niẓām al-Dīn to the shrine of Inayat Khan where it is laid down; (4) inside the shrine of Inayat Khan another *qawwālī* performance is given, Universal Sufi prayers as well as Qurʾanic verses and praise poems to the prophet Muḥammad and an Islamic prayer are recited in Urdu and Arabic, followed by several musical performances; (5) the 'universal worship' service is held in a room attached to the tomb of Inayat Khan; (6) once more, *qawwālī* is performed at the tomb of Inayat Khan.

3.1 Ritual participation and touristic imagination

On the morning of the *ʿurs*, the pilgrims from the USA and Europe assembled in front of the shrine of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ (2). The *qawwālī* musicians who had been engaged by the Universal Sufis for this occasion were facing the shrine from the back of the courtyard which was located in front of the shrine. The Universal Sufis sat down in two rows on both sides at a right angle to the shrine, roughly divided into male and female participants. This part of the ceremony was thus visible to the local public. Some local observers were watching from the outside.

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[28] Iser, *Act*, 84 f. and Iser, *Akt*, 141.

For this public audience, the recitation of different texts situated the ceremony in an Islamic context. The *silsila* (the chain of saints leading back to the prophet Muḥammad) and different invocations to and blessings of the prophet Muḥammad literally framed the Universal Sufis' prayers as they were recited before and after the Universal Sufis' English prayers. As most of the pilgrims of Universal Sufism did not understand Arabic and Urdu it can be assumed that, for them, these framing elements constituted 'gaps of indeterminacy'.

We further assume that the horizon against which these gaps were counterbalanced was constituted by the pilgrims' prior experiences as well as by the briefing on the evening before the *ʿurs*.[29] At this briefing, the pilgrims were told only a little about the content of the Qur'anic passages and the other Islamic prayers that they would hear the next day. *Qawwālī* was characterized as typically Indian. The location and India in general were presented as colourful and rich in detail.

When the pilgrims assembled in front of Niẓām al-Dīn's shrine on the following day, they were dressed and behaved in accordance with the customs of the shrine, expressing their *solemnis intentio*[30] through acts such as covering their head when entering the *dargah*, the occasional ritualized offering of money, as is common in the context of *qawwālī* performances at shrines, or the seating arrangements separating men and women, thereby respecting the spatial metaphor of a 'saint's courtyard'. Next to such unambiguous ritual arrangements, the most common activity among the pilgrims of Universal Sufism was taking pictures and filming the ceremony, as is often done during contemporary rituals. One of the Universal Sufis' *pīr*s, for example, passed on the money an Indian Sufi offered him – a common ritual act which is part of consecrating money during the *qawwālī* ritual – with one hand, while taking pictures with the other.

This combination of two different modes of participation, ritual participation and 'touristic' documentation, is significant in view of our argument. While one can speak of taking pictures metaphorically as a 'ritual of tourism', it is not a ritual act in the narrow sense. It, however, shows the crucial role imaginative processes play in the *ʿurs* ceremony, where touristic participation is integrated alongside ritual participation. It has been argued that touristic activities are highly imaginative as well as fictional and that tourism makes imagined realities experiencable.[31]

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29 If the briefing was an adaptation of the pilgrims' 'horizon of expectation', the *qawwāl*s' (*qawwāli* musicians) performance was an adaptation of the ritual to this horizon. In order to enhance the ritual's 'understandability', the *qawwāl*s altered their performance. Essential parts of the verses were omitted in favour of easily recognizable elements such as the repetition of 'refrains' etc.

30 The formal decision to perform a ritual. Cf. Michaels, "Le rituel", 30 f.

31 Karlheinz Wöhler, *Touristifizierung von Räumen: Kulturwissenschaftliche und soziologische Studien zur Konstruktion von Räumen,* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011, 82, who bases his argument on Jean-Michel Dewailly, "Sustainable tourist space: From reality to virtual reality?", *Tourism Geographies* 1 (1999), 41-55, 47 ff.

Imagination, fantasy and dreams are considered to be constitutive moments.[32] Against this background, the observed touristic participation constituted a further example of the importance of imaginative processes in the ceremony.

Susan Sontag's observation that taking pictures gives shape to experience[33] can, from our position, be seen positively as a creative act counterbalancing indeterminacy. By taking pictures the pilgrims fulfil their horizon of expectation on a visual level. The pictures documenting the *ʿurs* can be understood as the successful realization of their imaginative process prior to their arrival in Delhi as similar images can be found in the travel logs of Universal Sufis. The participants can thus reproduce – in a very concrete way – images they had seen before and which formed their expectations of the pilgrimage. Moreover, these images stand in the tradition of imagining the Orient. This counterbalancing of indeterminacy which the Universal Sufis accomplished in both of their roles, that of ritual participants and that of touristic participants, is analogous to the counterbalancing of indeterminacy in literary texts: an unfamiliar reality is experienced in an imaginative process.[34]

3.2 Enacting imagination

Another interesting example of counterbalancing indeterminacy was a performance connected to the *qawwālī*, given on the morning of the *ʿurs* ceremony (2). While listening to the music, a woman performed a whirling dance typical of the Mevlevi order.[35]

The *qawwālī* rituals at the shrine in Nizamuddin usually do not include such whirling dances, which have their origins in a different tradition of Sufism. Some (local) visitors to the shrine seemed quite surprised at the sight of a European woman starting to whirl while listening to the *qawwālī*'s performance. For many of the Universal Sufis, however, Mevlevi dances are associated with Sufism in general. Various members also performed such dances at the shrine of Inayat Khan.[36] It can be said that the dancer applied the ritual situation she was wit-

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32 Christoph Hennig, *Reiselust: Touristen, Tourismus und Urlaubskultur*, Frankfurt: Insel 1997, 56.

33 Susan Sontag, "On Photography", in: *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society*, David J. Crowley, ed., 3rd ed., New York: Longman 1999, 174-178, here 177.

34 Hennig has already emphasised the structural parallels between imagination in tourism and art, calling for the acknowledgement of the importance of imagination in this field, cf. Hennig, *Reiselust*, 57 and 59.

35 The importance of the dance for the perception of mystical life in Islam and its connection to the Mevlevi order is stressed, e.g., by Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, 179 f.

36 A report from the pilgrimage in 2007 might serve as an example to show that for the Universal Sufis the whirling dances are usually part of their *ʿurs*-celebration "[…] we celebrated with Dances of Universal Peace in a long double oval just in front of the entrance to the tomb. Mevlevi dervishes whirled inside by the tomb. It was an amazing and fulfilling moment where Murshid Sam's family brought music, dance, and joy in great measure, and many were carried by the wave of 'love, harmony, and beauty.'" Tamam Khan on her Blog http://

nessing, a *qawwālī* performance she was relatively unacquainted with, to her own horizon of expectation. In North America as well as in Europe, whirling dances are probably the foremost ritual associated with Sufism. They form part of the pilgrims' *imaginaire* which they refer to when counterbalancing the ceremony's indeterminacy. In doing so, they not only imagine their ritual, but they also – as the case of the whirling dervish shows – realize it.

In the case of the literary text, the text's realization (normally) takes place in the reader's imagination. In the case of the ceremony, the text's realization was taken to a bodily performative level as well. With the whirling dance, the realization became an element of the ceremony. It extended the ritual itself. The dance constituted a 'new' element in the ceremony, and called for a new counterbalancing: at this point, some of the local visitors to the shrine started to take photos.

3.3 Prayers of Universal Sufism

So far, we have described how different participants with different horizons of expectation can connect to the ritual, be it by observing and performing the usual ritual act; be it by documenting it as a touristic event; or be it by adding an element that corresponds to their own horizon of expectation. The following two examples are prayers which are, as we will see, in many ways complementary to each other. The first one is a Universal Sufi prayer recited at Niẓām al-Dīn's shrine (2) just before the *qawwālī* performance and the whirling dance discussed above. The second one is an Islamic prayer offered inside the shrine of Inayat Khan (4).

When reciting the central prayers of Universal Sufism – "Sawm", "Salat" and "Khatum"[37], all of them in English – in front of Niẓām al-Dīn's shrine, the Western pilgrims could clearly connect to this recitation as a liturgical act. There is an obvious affinity of the Universal Sufis' prayers to Christian prayers. For those listeners familiar with Christian liturgy, 'Our Father who art in heaven' resonates. The prayers' calm collective reading recalls Christian liturgy. Passages such as the "most merciful and compassionate God" whom the Universal Sufis address can doubtlessly be situated in an Islamic context as a possible translation of 'allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm' but equally fits with a Christian understanding. Verses such as "Teach us Thy loving Forgiveness, Raise us above the distinctions and differences which divide, Send us the Peace of Thy Divine Spirit, And unite us all in Thy Perfect Being"[38] could equally be connected to Christian concepts. Without even be-

completeword.wordpress.com/2010/01/25/celebration-in-delhi-india/ (accessed 19 March 2013).

37 The prayers' texts can be found for example at http://wahiduddin.net/mv2/say/gayan_gayatri.htm (accessed 19 March 2013). The titles "saum" and "salat" are the Arabic denominations for the annual fast (*ṣawm*) and the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*). The term "khatum" is used in Universal Sufism for the closing prayer.

38 Cf. the above-mentioned website http://wahiduddin.net/mv2/say/gayan_gayatri.htm (accessed 19 March 2013).

ing familiar with the Universal Sufi ceremony, anybody socialized in a Christian context can find in such prayers "a familiar world reproduced in an unfamiliar form"[39]. The English prayer certainly presented passages of high ambivalence which the listeners could connect with Sufi traditions as well as with theosophical concepts, e.g. when the believer sets out to recognize the "spirit of guidance […] as Rama, as Krishna, as Shiva, as Buddha […], as Abraham, as Solomon, as Zarathustra, as Moses, as Jesus, as Muhammad, and in many other names and forms, known and unknown to the world".[40] Parts like this, which build on familiar vocabulary, metaphors and performance,[41] were relatively determined for the Universal Sufis. This was evident in the pilgrims' behaviour: while there were, as pointed out, a variety of reactions to the *qawwālī* performance, their conduct during the prayer was quite uniform. All of the Universal Sufis knew the prayers by heart and recited them in chorus with the prayer leader.

Just as the Universal Sufis were not familiar with the prayers in Arabic and Urdu, this part was relatively indetermined for the 'regular' visitors to the shrine of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ who were passing by at that time. Also, the *qawwāl*s engaged by the Universal Sufis eventually showed signs of distraction during the English prayers. One could thus say that during the prayer of the Universal Sufis, it was the 'locals" turn to counterbalance indeterminacy.

What are the "possibilities of evaluation"[42] that create the potential for the ceremony to be imagined as an Islamic ritual? The overview of the ceremony showed that the framework of the ritual embedded the *ʿurs* of Inayat Khan in the local context of Nizamuddin, most notably by ranking the saint as a follower of the great Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ to whom reverence was paid by the pilgrims carrying his blessings (*baraka*) on the medium of the *čādar*. The *qawwālī* performance of course also fits this interpretation. There were further elements which catered to an 'Islamic' horizon of expectation, one of which will be discussed in the following section.

3.4 Prayers of North Indian Sufism

After the laying down of the *čādar* on Inayat Khan's tomb along with a short *qawwālī* performance (4), the central prayers of Universal Sufism were recited once more. Connected to this, however, were ritual elements which, while being usual in a North Indian Sufi context, were highly indetermined for the Universal Sufis.

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39 Cf. Iser, "Indeterminacy," 7.

40 http://wahiduddin.net/mv2/say/gayan_gayatri.htm (accessed 19 March 2013).

41 Of course, allusion was not only made to 'Christian' elements: 'Islamic' subtexts and influences were prominent as well, such as the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or Sufic light theories. These, however, were less relevant to the Universal Sufis' horizon of experience.

42 Iser's translation of the German "*Bewertungsmöglichkeiten*", cf. Iser, "Indeterminacy", 13, and Iser, *Appellstruktur*, 20.

The otherwise quite detailed programme which had been handed out to the pilgrims simply announced that "Sufi Prayers of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan – Fatiha" would be performed. As in the case of the *qawwālī* performance at the shrine of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ (2), the textual content was secondary. The subsequent recitation of Qurʾanic verses,[43] a *naʿt*,[44] the *silsila*,[45] and the *durūd-e tāj*[46] – all of which were performed by professional reciters at Inayat Khan's shrine – were not translated or commented upon. For most of the Universal Sufis these prayers therefore formed 'gaps of indeterminacy'. That they recognized the fact that it was some kind of liturgical text can be assumed from the way in which they remained seated, listening calmly to the recitation.

For the few participants who could identify the genres, follow the Suras and the *naʿt*, the Universal Sufis' rituals were placed through these performances in an Islamic frame. The performed prayer *durūd-e tāj* ('Blessing' or 'Invocation of the crown') is an Arabic invocation of God's blessings to the prophet who is believed to intercede on behalf of those uttering the prayer. The textual reference to the Islamic prophet found its performative equivalent in the reactions towards specific passages in the text.

The prayer numbers a long list of Muḥammad's epithets alluding to different episodes of his life. Reference is given to the prophet's night journey (*miʿrāj)* and his mount (*burāq).* He is further characterized as being the grandfather of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and as the *sayyid al-thaqalayn*, i.e. the 'master of both men and jinn'[47]. The term *sirāj al-sālikīn* ('lamp of travellers') constitutes a direct reference to the spiritual 'way' of the Sufi 'wayfarer', the *sālik*.

The few Indians present at the *dargah* of Inayat Khan during the prayers' recitation responded specifically to the text. For example, a *qawwāl* kissed his hand and touched his heart upon hearing the prophet's epithet *khātim al-nabiyyīn* ('seal of the prophets'); another one wiped his face with his palms as is also done after the recitation of the *fātiḥa.* What was important was the influence of the determinate passages on the passages left indeterminate: For the Indian participants these recita-

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43 Consisting of, among other verses, the *muʿawwidhatān*, the Suras 113 and 114, "the two sūras of taking refuge [from evil]", which "are pronounced as prayers intended to dispel the evils engendered by the devil, evil spirits, the practice of magic, etc." (C.E. Bosworth [et al.], "al-Muʿawwidhatāni", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 7, Leiden: Brill 1993, 269 f., 269b.) and the very popular 'throne verse', which is also attributed with healing powers.

44 The *naʿt* (praise song) performed here was the extremely popular *Har waqt taṣawwur meiṇ madīne kī galī ho*, in which the lyrical I imagines himself in Medina, seeking his final resting place in proximity and devotion to the prophet Muḥammad.

45 *Silsila*, literally "chain", refers to the genealogical line linking a Sufi master and his order to the prophet.

46 The *durūd-e tāj* is an invocation of blessing to the prophet.

47 This title can also be understood to refer to the *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*, 'the tradition about the two weighty things', which are the Qurʾan and the family of the prophet according to the Shiʿi tradition or the prophet's practice according to the Sunni tradition. Meir M. Bar-Asher, "Shīʿism and the Qurʾān", *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 4, Leiden: Brill 2004, 593-604, here 596.

tions situated the ceremony in an Islamic context. We might recall here that the *durūd-e tāj* is an important liturgical text. It marks Islamicity as it is popular among many Sufi orders and in the broader context of the Barelwī movement.[48] Its textual interpretation is the subject of significant theological controversies which go as far as prescribing the 'correct' intention and reception.[49]

We argue that the two prayers, the one recited by the Universal Sufis and the *durūd-e tāj*, had complementary functions: each group seemed to constitute the meaning of both, the determinate and the indeterminate prayer, by referring to the one known to them. This of course does not imply that a 'meaning' was conveyed exclusively by the prayer known to the respective group. It rather seems that for the Universal Sufis the unknown prayer served to add a further 'dimension' to the known one: By situating their prayers in the context of Islamic prayers, their 'Oriental'[50] connotations – already indicated by the 'Islamic' titles "Saum", "Salat" etc. – were reinforced. These added a foreign dimension, which could – against the background of the assumption of an equivalence of all religions – be interpreted as pointing in the same direction as the known prayers.

4. The ceremony's connotative meaning

As mentioned above,[51] the understanding of the ceremony as text is first of all situated on a 'macro level', since we understand the ceremony as a syntagma of different rituals. The degree of indeterminacy varies in accordance with the respective participants' horizon of experience. However, as has been mentioned in the different examples, indeterminacy is not only virulent on the 'macro level' but also on a 'micro level', i.e. not only on the level of the ceremony's overall structure but also on the level of the individual rituals.

In semiotic terms, every act of communication (and therefore also of perception) depends on codes. The success of communication will depend on the addressee's familiarity with the code(s) used for transmitting the message. Therefore, indeterminacy increases with decreasing code competence on the addressee's side. In the several examples given so far, it is a 'lack' of linguistic code competence which leads to indeterminacy.[52] The Arabic *durūd-e tāj* or the Urdu *naʿt* can

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48 Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and his Movement, 1870-1920,* Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press 1996.

49 While the prayer is championed by the Barelwī-movement, it is mostly rejected throughout the Deobandi tradition. An English Mufti from the "Darul Iftaa" in Leicester follows many of the points made by critics but deems the prayer permissible as long as the believer safeguards himself according to the reception guidelines provided by the Mufti, cf. http://www.daruliftaa.com/question?txt_QuestionID=q-13540795 (accessed 9 April 2013).

50 See below footnote 54.

51 Cf. the second section of this article, 'Indeterminacy and the *ʿurs* Ceremony'.

52 At this point, we cannot give a detailed analysis of the individual rituals to further elucidate their function in semiotic terms. We limit ourselves to general observations on the overall structure with some selective remarks on individual cases.

serve as two extreme cases. As nearly none of the Universal Sufis who participated in the 2010 pilgrimage spoke either Arabic or Urdu[53], the textual content of the prayers, both of which were performed without translation, was not accessible to them. However, as has been indicated, this does not at all mean that the prayers were meaningless to them.

Firstly, individual words might be understood even if the addressee in question is not familiar with the linguistic code, e.g. when familiar proper nouns are used. In such cases, where the words are 'freed' from their syntactic relations, connotations gain importance. Of course, the actualisation of connotations also depends on code competence. If we assume that the linguistic code is not mastered, the words cannot serve as signifiers and can therefore also not signify connotations. However, the 'role of the signifier' can in our case be fulfilled by the sound of the language.[54]

Second, the recognition of form depends on code competence as well. Given adequate code competence, the Urdu *naʿt* is recognizable in its form, i.e. even without linguistic code competence in the narrow sense, as praise directed to the prophet Muḥammad. As far as the Universal Sufis in the ceremony are concerned, it seemed to us that most of them did not 'situate' the form and genre of the recited text in this specific context, but rather in the general one, of prayers being recited. Such a 'lacking' ritual competence can certainly not be understood as a shortcoming, rather the contrary holds true: it seems to be precisely the ritual's indeterminacy arising from this configuration which is meaningful and also intended in the ritual's design. If this was otherwise, more effort would have been made to fill the gaps of understanding through explanations or translations.

We therefore argue that the Universal Sufis enjoyed the recitations – as well as other rituals – particularly and precisely on the basis of their indeterminacy.[55] Through the 'reduction' of the 'rituals' to form they were in a sense enhanced: the hollow form stimulated imaginative processes and provided connotative freedom. It allowed the pilgrims to ascribe to 'their' ceremony – through connotation – characteristic qualities attributed to (Universal) Sufism, to religions in a broader sense, or to the Indian context.[56] Analogous to the *Italianicity* which Barthes identifies in his above-mentioned analysis of an advertisement for Italian pasta as one

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53 At least two participants were, however, fluent in both Urdu and Arabic.

54 Cf. Barthes' observation on the assonance of the word *Panzani* providing a supplementary signified, *Italianicity*. Roland Barthes, "Rhétorique de l'image", *Communications* 4 (1964), 40-51, here 41.

55 Like Iser in his theory of reading, we assume that also in the case of the Universal Sufism pilgrimage, most of the participants are not aware of this indeterminacy.

56 For the question of connotation in this sense, cf. also Eco, *Open,* 31 (or Eco, *Kunstwerk,* 70 f.) where Eco outlines the possibility of using "Basra" either in a denotative sense, or "with a specific suggestive intention", in order "to connote (and evoke) an entire world of memories […], a world of memories that […] will inevitably differ from one listener to the next."

of the signifieds of connotation (*signifié de connotation*),[57] in the case of the *ʿurs* ceremony one might speak of '*Indianicity*'.

5. The ceremony's perspective system

So far, we have stressed the many 'gaps of indeterminacy' that can be found in the Universal Sufism *ʿurs* ceremony, all of which allow the participants to align the respective parts with their own horizon of expectations. However, the reader of a literary text not only participates in the creation of the text's meaning by filling in single spots of indeterminacy. Another important aspect is linked to the text's perspectives, examples for which are, according to Iser, "authorial comment, dialogue between characters, developments of plot [...]." [58] Crucial to the reader's participation is the establishment of relations between the different perspectives which the text provides. These perspectives are potentially disruptive, as they are never fully congruent with one other and it remains up to the reader to put them together.

The system that structures the perspectives, and thus enables the reader to understand the text, is, following Iser, the alternation between 'theme' and 'horizon': "[T]he view he [the reader] is involved with at any one particular moment is what constitutes for him the 'theme'. This, however, always stands before the 'horizon' of the other perspective segments in which he had previously been situated."[59]

The ceremony obviously does not offer direct equivalences to the different perspectives in literary texts. The concept of perspective is, however, useful as the ceremony encompasses different rituals. The rituals can be interpreted as signs of their respective ritual tradition. Each ritual stands for a tradition. In this sense, we can speak of two different 'perspectives' on Sufism which are set in relation to each other by the ceremony: the Universal Sufi perspective and the 'Chishtī' one.[60] As the ceremony's two perspectives alternate we can say that they form a structure akin to that of theme and horizon. This would mean that each theme is viewed in relation to the past themes, i.e. "before the 'horizon' of the other perspective segments". This correlation of different rituals which 'cite' these perspectives, we argue, increases their respective meaning potential (*Sinnpotential*), and particularly the meaning potential of the ceremony as a whole.

On the morning of the *ʿurs,* the frequency of alternation was relatively high, i.e. the implicit perspectives remained theme for a relatively short time. During the Universal Sufi prayer, for example, the perspective of Universal Sufism constituted the ceremony's theme. It, however, became part of the horizon when, during the following Arabic prayer, the 'Chishtī' perspective constituted the ceremony's theme.

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57 Barthes, "Rhétorique", 49.
58 Iser, *Act*, 96 and Iser, *Akt*, 163.
59 Iser, *Act*, 97 and Iser, *Akt*, 164.
60 Of course, it is not the intention here to construct a dichotomy between two different entities. Each perspective in itself is manifold and both overlap.

The speed of this alternation of theme and horizon decreased over the day: while the morning demanded a continuous reorientation between the two perspectives, the afternoon and evening only featured one single element which could potentially present a 'Chishti' perspective, i.e. another *qawwālī* performance. However, the 'Chishtī' perspective was no longer established as the ceremony's theme. One of the Universal Sufi leaders substituted the *qawwālī*'s text with a rap performance using his own text and rhythm: despite this potentially alien element, the theme of Universal Sufism remained in the foreground while the 'Chishtī' perspective remained relegated to the horizon.

In summary, one can speak of an increasing stabilisation of the Universal Sufi perspective as the ceremony's theme over the course of the day. From a variation of perspectives including that of North Indian Sufism, this structure guided the Universal Sufis towards their own perspective and aesthetic preference with the Sufism of Nizamuddin serving as horizon and providing the 'desired' connotations.

6. The meaning of ritual: indeterminacy and aesthetics

The question of whether rituals and their elements have a 'meaning' is much discussed in ritual studies. While the debate about the relation between ritual and myth is of course much older,[61] the more recent debate about the meaning of rituals received new fuel from Frits Staal's thesis that "[t]he meaninglessness of ritual explains the variety of meanings attached to it"[62]. In his important article, Hans Penner highlights the contradictions in Staal's argument, such as Staal's assumption of the existence of syntax without semantics.[63] Equally, for Axel Michaels "the meaninglessness of rituals only concerns the invariability of prescribed actions and the polysemy of rituals […] Apart from that, rituals have a great variety of meanings and functions."[64]

This possibility of a variety of meanings is one focus of Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw's study on the Jain *Puja*. They argue that an action's identity is generally defined by the actor's intention. According to them, "ritualized action is non-intentional"[65] and therefore not intrinsically meaningful. It is, however, "'ap-

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61 Prominent examples of which include Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, James George Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Lévi-Strauss' reflections on mythology such as his *Mythologiques*.

62 Staal, "Meaninglessness", 12.

63 Penner, "Language", 3, 10 f.

64 Axel Michaels, "Ritual and Meaning", in: *Theorizing Rituals: Supplement to Numen*, Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Strausberg, eds, Leiden: Brill 2006, 248-261, here 261; cf. also Michaels, "Le rituel", 27, 45.

65 Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994, 89.

prehensible', waiting to be apprehended and, possibly, given meaning".[66] This attribution of meaning involves, according to Humphrey and Laidlaw, "creative imagination" as well as "the search for interpretations in a store of background and tacit knowledge".[67] Participants draw on "a stock of images and ideas […] in order to attribute extremely various meanings to their ritual acts".[68]

What Humphrey and Laidlaw call 'background' and 'tacit knowledge' corresponds with the horizon of experience in hermeneutical terms. It is against the 'background' of this horizon that meaning is attributed. We argue that if in our case "extremely various meanings" can be "attributed", this is due to a specific ritual structure which is characterized by indeterminacy. This indeterminacy results in (*a*) the ceremony's high connectability due to the possibility of different readings – a sociologically important function in the case of Nizamuddin –, (*b*) highly individual experiences, as each participant imagines the ceremony within his/her own horizon, along with (*c*) the 'denotations' of ritual elements fading in favour of possible connotations.

Given the structurally conditioned high ambiguity of the *ʿurs* of Universal Sufism, we can speak of an 'open ritual'. It seems important that from a semiotic point of view the 'disorder of the code' caused by ambiguity is typical for aesthetic messages.[69] With an ambiguous code, connections are created "which as of yet do not exist"[70]. Although a ritual is not an artwork and, as stated initially, rituals performed at the *ʿurs* are unusual, striking parallels can be drawn (at least) with the ceremony in question: Indeterminacy, performance and aesthetic quality are interlinked.

It is no coincidence that such parallels can be drawn particularly in the case of the rituals performed by a *New* Religious Movement. It is in modernity that literary texts witness a significant increase in indeterminacy, which changes the relationship between the text and the reader. Likewise, modern ritual may be characterized specifically by an increased indeterminacy and a subsequent change in the relationship between the ritual and the participant. This is the case in the ritual discussed here: While the ritual's structure entails the performance of 'correct' and prescribed acts, it also triggers an imaginative performance – a performance required by the ritual's increased indeterminacy.

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66 Humphrey and Laidlaw, *Archetypal*, 101.

67 Humphrey and Laidlaw, *Archetypal*, 193, referring to Sperber's conception of symbolism.

68 Humphrey and Laidlaw, *Archetypal*, 193.

69 Eco, *Opera*, 126 and Eco, *Open*, 66. The cited postscript from 1966 is not included in the above-mentioned German translation. Cf. also Umberto Eco, *Einführung in die Semiotik*, 9th ed., Munich: Fink, 2002, 151.

70 Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979, 79.

Essentializing Difference: Text, Knowledge, and Ritual Performance in a Sufi Brotherhood in Italy

Paola Abenante

Prologue

In March 2004, the Italian converts to the Tariqa Burhaniya, a Sufi brotherhood of Egyptian-Sudanese origin[1], read an article I had written about my research, carried out for my master thesis, on the Italian branches of the Tariqa.[2] My text sparked off an animated discussion among the Burhani disciples attending the *zāwiya* (lodge) in Rome, led by Abdel Ghafour, – an aged intellectual man belonging to the high Italian bourgeoisie who had encountered Islam some twenty years earlier through a group of intellectuals and academics devoted to the study of mystical texts. According to Abdel Ghafour, I had placed far too much stress on the role of bodily practice and ritual performance within the journey of mystical progression, thereby devaluing the intellectual and spiritual engagement required by the Sufi path. I went through an informal trial that finally judged me guilty of misunderstanding the real core of Sufis. The Italians decided to further submit my case to an expert, namely to Safwat, 'the' international Burhani teacher, so that my presence in the Tariqa could be reconsidered. I met Safwat on 'hostile' territory, Abdel-Ghafour's living room, one spring afternoon in Rome. To my great, and Abdel-Ghafour's even greater, surprise, Safwat praised my insight. The body and the performance of rituals had an indispensable role within the Burhani spiritual journey, he maintained. His verdict was that the European converts, and especially the Italians, were overly influenced by their study of Islam and by their previous Catholic education, to the point that they did not acknowledge the importance of the body on their spiritual journey and the mate-

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1 Founded in the middle of the 20th century by Shaykh Muḥammad ʿUthmān ʿAbduh al-Burhānī [henceforth Shaykh Mohammed Uthman] in Atbara, Sudan, the Tariqa Burhaniya [arab. al-Ṭarīqa al-Burhāniyya] spread rapidly from Sudan to Cairo during the 1960s, achieving great success among the middle classes and a certain visibility among foreigners. In the 1980s the Burhaniya concentrated its efforts on its European branches that had been thriving since the 1970s, especially in Germany. See Pierre Jean Luizard, "Egypte: Le rôle des confréries soufies dans le système politique égyptien", *Maghreb-Machrek* 131 (1991), 26-53; Pierre Jean Luizard, "Le soufisme égyptien contemporain", *Egypte/Monde Arabe* 2 (1990), 36-94; Valerie Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press 1995.

2 Paola Abenante, "La tariqa Burhaniyya, una via del l'Islam in Italia", *Afriche e Orienti* 3 (2004), 163-171.

rial efficacy of Burhani ritual performances, be it the *ḥaḍra* (the weekly collective ritual), the *awrād* recitation (the individual litanies), or the singing of *qaṣā'id* (the odes written by Shaykh Uthman, the founder).

I was thus reintroduced into the community. However, following this episode, my presence was looked upon with some suspicion. Safwat's decision continued to generate gossip and some dissatisfaction among the converts for some time. His decision, together with my article circulating among the milieus of Italian Islam, was held responsible for stoking the reformists' fire against Sufism by insinuating the suspicion of heterodoxy and the backwardness of Burhani practices.

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This episode familiarized me with a tension present within the Burhaniya concerning the proper way of practising Sufism, informed by an alleged opposition between intellectual engagement with the scriptures and the bodily performance of ritual. This opposition was framed by my interlocutors in terms of the Sufi/anti-Sufi debate, a prominent and enduring issue among Muslims, that has gained momentum with the rise of Islamic reformism and according to which Sufi ritual life is coupled with backward practices and set against an allegedly 'orthodox' scriptural Islam.[3] As scholars have noted, Sufism and Islamic reformism are not opposed realities, and many studies have described how reformist ideas and practices, scripturalist tendencies, as well as popular ecstatic rituals, charismatic leadership and supererogatory ritual praxis are all elements that belong to both Sufi and non-Sufi movements. By the same token, in Islam as in many other religious settings, reading and performing, the work of the intellect and that of the body, are not in principle two distinct practices. On the contrary, the Qur'an itself is a text that contains Revelation both in the semantic dimension of the words and in the sound of its performance. *Iqra'*, "read out loud", is the imperative summoning the Muslim who is invited to vocalize the prescriptions of the Qur'an in order to both apprehend the manifest meaning conveyed by the propositionality of language – the *ẓāhir* in Sufi vocabulary – and perform its inner, symbolic meaning – the *bāṭin* –, conveyed by the sound of the Arabic letters.[4]

From an analytical point of view, scholars of Islam, anthropologists and linguists, beyond confuting the existence of a concrete doctrinal and socio-cultural distinction between Sufis and non-Sufis, rightly insist on breaking down the binary between the semantic/propositional and the embodied/material dimensions of language, showing how words (and texts) call into play the human being as a whole, his/her moral physiology, and how the embodied and emotional dimen-

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3 Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke, eds, *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, Leiden: Brill 1999; Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*, New York: Curzon Press 1999.

4 Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qu'ran* [1985], Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press 2001.

sions are one with reason and reflection.[5] Whereas I agree with the analytical value of this insight, at the same time I also stress the importance of acknowledging the fact that people actually, if more or less consciously, employ these binaries in making sense of their way of living Islam. As ethnographers, we should not overlook people's prosaic use of essentialisms and oppositions. On the contrary, we should make them the object of ethnographic analysis, as I set out to do in this paper.[6]

By looking at the dynamics of the polarization between text/ritual, reading/performing, intellect/body within the Italian branch of an Egyptian-Sudanese Sufi brotherhood, I suggest that such a polarization, together with the reasons for its persistence, may be understood through the ways in which it blends and overlaps with other discourses[7] and dynamics of Islam in Europe, particularly in Italy, and the work these discourses do in the practice of Islam and in people's lives.

The Italian Branch
First converts: traditionalism and the intellectualist approach

The Tariqa Burhaniya arrived in Italy more or less 40 years ago, brought by an Egyptian migrant and *murshid* (spiritual master), Jalal, who had moved to Rome with his wife in search of a job. Until 1984 the disciples of the Italian branch were very few, in the number of two or three immigrants. They met for the weekly *ḥaḍra* in a specific mosque on the outskirts of Rome, on piazza Pitagora.

The first Italian to approach the brotherhood was a man, Matteo Abdel Haq, a secondary school philosophy teacher, with an academic background in philosophy and history of religions. Some years before meeting Jalal, in 1980 to be precise, Matteo had converted to Islam under the guidance of his academic friends. He recounted his experience as follows:

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5 Among others: Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization, vol. 1: The Classical Age of Islam*, Chicago: Chicago University Press 1974; Nelson, *The Art of Reciting*; Barbara Metcalf, "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (1993), 584-608; Thomas Csordas, *Language, Charisma and Creativity: Ritual Life in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1997; Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, New York: Columbia University Press 2006; Ines Weinrich, "Experiencing the Divine Word: A Women's Spiritual Gathering in Beirut", *al-Raida* 125 (2009), 48-55.

6 This ethnographic approach to strategic essentialism is inspired also to Pnina Werbner, "Essentialising essentialism, essentialising silence: ambivalence and multiplicity in the constructions of racism and ethnicity", in: *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Pnina Werbner and Talal Modood, eds, London: Zed Books 1997, 226-256; Bruno Riccio, "Transnational Mouridism and the Afro-Muslim Critique of Italy", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30 (2004), 929-944.

7 By 'discourse', I mean a group of statements which provide a language for talking and thinking about a particular subject.

> My path towards Islam has been very long and complicated. I have always been interested in the mysteries of the world, in the search of truth, beauty and wisdom. Following my BA in philosophy I continued my studies but with much dissatisfaction, so I started studying, all alone, Christianity, its history... I embarked upon the path and I spoke with a number of monks, I visited many monasteries, even in Greece. After that came my interest in Hinduism – it was fashionable then in the sixties – and I practised yoga... but also this path was not satisfying for me. Concerning Islam... well I had avoided it altogether because I had many prejudices... when I discovered that an 'inner' Islam existed beyond 'exterior' Islam I understood that it was possible, also for Westerners, to become Muslims. I had some friends from university who knew a lot about Islam because of their studies, and had already converted to Islam. I asked them to help me to approach it and they introduced me to the study of the religion.[8]

It was at this moment that Abdel Haq met, by chance, Jalal, in the mosque on piazza Pitagora where he used to pray, and had been fascinated by the practice of the *ḥaḍra* ritual.

Soon after, in the mid-eighties, three other Italians joined this pioneering group: Abdel Ghafour, Abdel Rahim and Leila. Before encountering the Burhaniya they had tried out several other Sufi brotherhoods. Abdel Ghafour and Abdel Rahim, just like Abdel Haq, had converted to Islam through their studies, having read much about Islam and Sufi spirituality. Abdel Rahim's wife Leila had followed him on his Sufi tours from brotherhood to brotherhood until they both stopped and became affiliated with the Burhaniya in 1986. After their divorce, Leila stayed in the Burhaniya, while Abdel Rahim changed brotherhood once again.

Starting from the above four cases of conversion, we can draw the contours of the first generation of Italian Burhanis and gather the threads of their representation of Islam and the expectations they linked to the practice of Sufism. Abdel Haq, Abdel Ghafour, Abdel Rahim and Leila had all joined the brotherhood at the beginning of the 1980s, their journey towards Islam burgeoning from their academic studies or from their intellectual engagement with Islamic texts. The intellectual and the spiritual discovery of Islam overlapped, following a pattern of conversion common to a broad generation of Italian (and more generally European) converts to Sufism.[9] Indeed, many of these converts, including the first Italian Burhani constituency, accessed Islam through the door of Traditionalism[10], a syncretic philosophy postulating the loss of a spiritual tradition in the West and the

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8 Interview with Abdel Haq, Rome 2002.

9 Stefano Allievi, *I nuovi musulmani. I convertiti all'islam*, Roma: Edizioni Lavoro 1999; Stefano Allievi, "Pour une sociologie des conversions: lorsque des Européens deviennent musulmans", *Social Compass* 46 (1999), 283-300; Alessandra Marchi, *Les formes du soufisme en Italie. Le devenir des confréries islamiques en Occident*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales 1999.

10 Mark Sedgwick, "Western Sufism and Traditionalism", URL: http://www.traditionalists.org/write/WSuf.htm (accessed in 2004); Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004; Marchi, *Les formes du Soufisme*.

necessity of seeking it in an allegedly spiritually superior Orient. In this sense, the converts' intellectual approach to Islam is associated with a quest for 'Oriental philosophies' and with a fascination for Oriental meditation practices and exotic styles of life.[11]

On the basis of its first constituency, the Italian branch of the Burhaniya could be classified as belonging to an elitist group of brotherhoods spread across Italy and mainly composed of converts coming from a university education background and equipped with an intellectual knowledge of Islam.[12] Within these brotherhoods the study of Islamic and mystical treaties is given primacy over ritual practice and the converts enjoy a sense of distinction because of their knowledgeable approach to Islam, their leaning towards spiritual matters and their neglect of worldly religious engagements. Such an approach to Islam is considered more adaptable to Italian society than the approach proposed by other brotherhoods and Sunni movements, the latter two often being criticized for practising a traditional, cultural form of religion, and for their strict rules of conduct.

Burhaniya in 2002: beyond traditionalism

By the time I started my fieldwork in 2002, the Italian branch owned an apartment of roughly 50 square metres in the north of Rome, in Valle Aurelia. Approaching the location, the recitation of the *awrād* and the singing of the *qaṣā'id* could be heard from the street and upon entering the apartment the visitor was met with the intense smell of Sudanese *bakhūr* (incense) and the kindness of the disciples. A pair of curtains was drawn, summarily dividing the one-room apartment into two spaces on the occasion of the *ḥaḍra*, the weekly collective ritual, for men and women to sit apart. The walls were decorated with photos of Medina and Mecca and several other photos of the *maqām* (shrine) of Mohammed Uthman, the founder himself, and of his son and grandson, and of all Shaykhs of the Tariqa. A green moquette covered the floor and at the far end of the room stood a small console, holding a Qur'an, that functioned as *miḥrāb*, pointing in the direction of Mecca. On the right of the entrance stood a closet, containing the Burhani rosary, Italian

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11 Traditionalism was a loose movement of people in Europe between the 1920s and 1960s, without formal structure, connected by a common debt to the work of René Guénon. Guénon (1886-1951) was a French author and intellectual working and writing on Eastern metaphysical doctrines considered to have a universal character and to be the last heirs of spirituality in the modern world. Having converted to Islam during his youth, he saw in Sufism the best route towards universal spirituality. A number of European intellectuals were inspired by his writings and example; in some cases European branches of Sufi brotherhoods were based on his teachings. See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*.

12 On the Italian panorama of Sufi brotherhoods see in particular Fabrizio Speziale, "I sentieri di Allah: aspetti della diffusione dell'Islam delle confraternite in Italia", *La Critica Sociologica* 135 (2000), 10-31; Elisabetta Marchi, "Le vie del sufismo. Panorama degli ordini mistici in Italia", in: *Islam, Italia*, Roberto Gritti and Magdi Allam, eds, Milano: Guerini e Associati 2001, 135-150; Marchi, *Les formes du Soufisme*.

translations of books on Sufism and spirituality by René Guénon, Titus Burckhardt and other Traditionalists[13], the *awrād* booklets and several copies of the *Baṭā'in al-asrār* (The Hidden Secrets), that is, the founder's collection of *qaṣā'id*.

In 2002 the branch in Rome counted approximately 30 disciples, a group which consisted of different types of converts and an equivalent number of immigrants, mainly Egyptian and Sudanese *murshids* (teachers) and *munshids* (singers) belonging to the Tariqa. After the phase of its first converts, beyond the increasing number of immigrants, the Burhaniya progressively witnessed a change among its Italian constituency: a wave of new converts, ignorant about Islam, approached the Tariqa as a consequence of professional or personal troubles (illness, family quarrels, work problems etc.). Leila, Abdul Rahim's (former) wife, who had followed the Tariqa since the beginning, commented on the progressive change of the constituency and its orientation:

> The idea of Islam came upon me because during that period reading René Guénon was really in fashion. In fact all the old disciples who are now in the brotherhood, the men I mean, come from that school. I was married to Abdul Rahim and I was the only woman taking part in the discussions. They were theoreticians who talked only philosophy, theology, and philology ... I really felt that this was totally useless. Once I even said to them: why do you talk all the time instead of taking action and practising? Today only a few of these theoreticians are still in the Tariqa, the others have left. The Shaykh has taught us that the primary tool is the method, the individual *awrād* ritual path organized by the *murshid*.[14]

Leila's words testify to the emergence of the polarity between an intellectual and a practical approach to Sufism, linked to the disciples' different approaches to Islam and amplified by the progressive assertion of the Egyptian direction. In 2002, the Italian Burhaniya qualified as a mixed brotherhood, and not only in terms of its diverse ethnic composition, but also because of its ambivalent ideology and praxis of Islam, caught between the need to include the immigrants' specific culture of Islam and the converts' more intellectual approach. In this sense, the comment by Abdul Rahim, Leila's ex-husband and one of the converts who left the Burhaniya, is revealing:

> The level that Shaykh Mohammed Uthman calls the *maqām* (stage) of liberation can be reached through two different paths: either following a regular path with regular *awrād*, or through an overabundance of ritual performance. This is why I think that the Burhaniya is a *ṭarīq* (path) and not a *ṭarīqa* (path organized by a brotherhood), because even if someone manages to reach the *maqām* of liberation through an excess of rituals and a good intention, he then anyway stops there and is not able to advance in his spiritual life. It is a fact that the Burhaniya has lost all of the intellectuals among its disciples. Just like all the other Guénonians, I too left the brotherhood.[15]

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13 Cf. n. 4.

14 Interview with Leila, Rome 2002.

15 Interview with Abdul Rahim, Rome 2002.

Dissatisfied with the present-day constituency of the Burhaniya, Abdul Rahim emphasized that the Shaykh did not select his followers and was welcoming to anyone who wanted to approach Sufism, whether Muslim or not. Abdul Rahim added that many of the new converts did not know the Qur'an, they were ignorant about the Sunna and were not interested in studying religious matters, therefore they could not aspire to truly understand Islam. By accepting followers who lacked the elementary notions of Islam and Sufism, the Burhaniya, from his point of view, was not a proper Islamic Sufi brotherhood, and came close to heterodoxy. In Abdul Rahim's words, the intellectualist tendency of the Traditionalist converts converges with the reformist approach of objectifying Islam[16], that is to say, transforming Islam into an object of intellectual analysis, something to be understood. By criticizing the Burhanis for their lack of attention to texts, scriptures and intellectual engagement, Abdul Rahim was positioning the Burhaniya right in the middle of the Italian debate around Islam.

The panorama of Islam in Italy is fragmented into different ideologically and politically competing parties, which make it impossible for 'Italian Islam' to acquire an identity and to have, even today, a coherent voice in its dialogue with Italian institutions.[17] This range of different parties includes at one end of the spectrum a conservative extreme, represented by the UCOII (*Union of the Islamic Communities in Italy*). Ideologically linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, the UCOII has a reformist mindset that espouses a scripturalist approach, foregrounding individual critical reasoning about Islamic texts, before the role of ritual practice and mystical experience. At the other end of the spectrum come the Sufi brotherhoods that make up, themselves, a very inhomogeneous lot: there are brotherhoods consisting prevalently of immigrants, such as the Senegalese Muridiyya, as well as brotherhoods composed predominantly of converts, such as the COREIS (*Communita Religiosa Islamica*), an association of Sufi-oriented movements linked to the milieu of converts and Guénonians. In the middle of this wide range of movements there are other formations such as the so-called "nations' Islam", or the "Islam of the mosques", an expression of the political orientation of the nations of emigration.[18]

In 2002 the Burhaniya did not fully fit into either of these parties and found itself in the position of confronting, on the one hand, the reformist/Islamist

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16 Gregory Starret, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1998.

17 The Italian Constitution recognises freedom of religion and the right of all religions to self-organise. Their relations with the Italian state are regulated by law in the form of bilateral agreements between representatives of a religion and the state. As of 2014 there is no such agreement concerning Islam because there is no organisation unanimously agreed upon as representative of the various parties of Muslims in Italy.

18 Chantal Saint-Blancat, *L'Islam in Italia, una presenza plurale*, Rome: Edizioni Lavoro 1999; Gritti and Allam, *Islam*; Renzo Guolo, "Le organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia e le reti transnazionali di riferimento", paper presented at the conference *L'islam in Italia. Appartenenze religiose plurali e strategie diversificate*, Torino, 2-3 December 2004.

criticism against rote and 'heterodox' ritual practice, and the need to speak to the more universalizing and spiritualist tendencies of the COREIS and the converts' approach to Oriental philosophies on the other. Early on in the course of my fieldwork, I realized that such an increasing polarization of the practice and understanding of Islam within the Burhaniya, together with the brotherhood's idiosyncratic collocation within the ideological panorama of Italian Islam, mapped onto yet another discourse: a form of cultural essentialism played out in the difficult encounter between Italian converts and Egyptian immigrants.

Cultural essentialisms: intellectualist versus embodied knowledge

In the course of our interviews and conversations Jalal, the first *murshid* of the Italian branch, often mentioned that the Italians were yet unable to manage the Tariqa's teachings and ritual life by themselves, because they were too young to Sufism, and he thus concluded that his guidance was indispensable. Because of his Egyptian background and his competency in the Arabic language, which allowed him access to the 'secrets' of the sacred language of the Qur'an, Jalal claimed for himself the exclusive entitlement to manage the Italian branch of the Tariqa and its pedagogical path. A year or so before my encounter with the Burhaniya, Jalal had been accused by the converts of wanting to seize control of the Tariqa, and of betraying the Shaykh and his rules. The news of this unhappy incident soon reached the brotherhood's centre, in Egypt. The Shaykh immediately discharged the Egyptian *murshid* from his duties and assigned Abdel Ghafour the temporary management of the *irshād* (spiritual guidance). Safwat, another and more highly qualified Egyptian *murshid*, was to arrive a few months later in order to take charge of the spiritual advancement of the Italian branch. Eagerly awaited, Safwat's arrival in Italy, however, very soon thwarted the Italians' expectations.

Introduced by the Shaykh as an international teacher of the Burhaniya, Safwat was expected to be very knowledgeable in spiritual matters and mystical treaties and was welcomed by the Italians with open arms: the Italian brothers paid the expenses for his trip and Abdel Ghafour acted as his legal guarantor in the issuance of the visa. Safwat was well aware that his future in Italy greatly depended upon his performance as a teacher and upon his ability to gain the Italian brethren's confidence. And, as he later told me, he had immediately felt inadequate to the role he had been chosen for:

> When Abdel Ghafour fetched me at the airport he wanted me to translate one *qaṣīda*. We spent the entire drive on just one verse. So he knew I did not speak English … My English was terrible. When explaining religion I could not talk in English. For 20 years I hadn't spoken English, since secondary school …[19]

[19] Interview with Safwat, Rome 2003.

This episode was the first in a series of miscomprehensions between Safwat and his Italian hosts: miscomprehensions that sprang from the ambiguity of him being, at once, a teacher and an immigrant, the ambiguity between what the Italians expected from him as a teacher and the prejudices they held towards him as an immigrant. Soon enough Safwat discovered that his lack of competence in the Italian and English languages was but a first and superficial expression of what the Italian perceived as a deeper inadequacy which was rooted in the way he inhabited and used his body in religion and, notably, in his whole conception of Islamic knowledge. The converts expected Safwat to be a knowledgeable teacher who could help them navigate the sea of spiritual knowledge contained in Sufi treatises, helping them to fully master Islamic literature. To their great disappointment they had to cope with a man who could barely speak English and who mechanically practised his rituals.

These miscomprehensions fed into a deeper tension that had been vexing the Italian branch since the beginnings and was linked to a form of cultural essentialism driving the converts' attitudes towards those fellow disciples coming from abroad, the 'immigrants'. Shams, one of the first Italian converts, summarized this tension in an interview he held with me right after the scandal:

> Many of these, let's call them extra-communitarians, come to Italy to work. They already belong to the Tariqa in Egypt before arriving, but they do not perceive it as we do ... they are not at our level ... we, we are seeking a spiritual path, a spiritual lineage ... for them the Tariqa is a .. a natural thing .. they start practicing the *awrād* and they are not conscious of what they are doing ... Many of them say: tell me what I have to do, I don't want to know the theory ... they don't want to *know*, understand ... For us instead understanding is the core of inner growth, for both spiritual and cultural advancement ... we may call it *knowledge*.[20]

Shams speaks for all the converts: the priority of intellectual knowledge is beyond discussion, and hence the engagement with Islamic and Sufi treaties is deemed essential to being a proper Muslim. The dissatisfaction with Jalal, Safwat and their understanding of Islam easily slips into a form of cultural hierarchization in which 'we' becomes one with 'knowledge', 'high culture' and the search for the 'spiritual', while 'they', the immigrants, the extra communitarians, are seen as driven by habit, nature and lacking in spirituality. A racial discourse on the 'Oriental's' lack of consciousness and the disparagement of the racialized body as a symbol of irrationality are culturalized. Difference is reified and asserted on cultural grounds.[21] The converts' suspicion towards an approach to Sufism based on ritual performance is mapped onto a prejudice against an alleged Egyptian form of Islam, according to which Islamic practice is an unconscious habit driven by societal factors and associated with traditional, if not backward, customs. By contrast, the path of Sufism,

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[20] Shams, Rome 2002.

[21] Ralph Grillo, "Cultural essentialism and cultural anxiety", *Anthropological Theory* 2 (2003), 157-173.

from the Italians' point of view, is a conscious striving for *knowledge*, and Islam itself is understood as carrying a set of beliefs to be consciously learned rather than unconsciously apprehended. A 'cultural' hierarchy is established, thus social difference is essentialized: by asserting authority on cultural grounds, the Italians at the same time reinforce the already existing relationships of power between converts and Egyptians brought about by the latters' status as immigrants. Indeed, the inequality in the relationship between Safwat and the converts grew parallel to Safwat's dependence upon the converts for financial and bureaucratic support.

Falling in the middle of the wider debate on the position of Sufism in Italy (and in Egypt[22]), in which the Burhaniya needed to find its standpoint, this tension was soon framed in the terms of the anti-Sufi debate: the cultural stigmatization of rote performance and ritual body practice dovetailed with the fear of a possible critique coming from the reformist parties in Italy such as the UCOII, which at the time was leading the dialogue with Italian institutions. From the converts' point of view, Jalal's and Safwat's approach to Sufism foregrounded ritual performance at the expenses of intellectual knowledge and the study of both mystical texts and Islamic scriptures, preventing the Burhaniya from legitimately positioning itself among the Italian 'orthodox' Islamic movements.

Cultural essentialism reversed: the value of performance

The same prosaic essentialism characterizing the converts' discourse was deployed by the Egyptians themselves as a form of defence against the Italians' hostile attitudes: on the one hand, by assuming and foregrounding an essentialized representation of Islamic knowledge as primarily an embodied form of knowledge, Safwat stressed his position as a proper Muslim. On the other, he asserted his authority by describing the Italians' ignorance in matters such as ritual performance and the

[22] Indeed, in those same years, in the face of the Islamic revival and the renewed focus of reform-minded Muslims on Islamic scriptures, the main branch of the Burhaniya in Egypt found itself at the centre of a harsh debate concerning the heterodoxy of their cosmologies and practices. The critics raged against allegedly esoteric and heterodox doctrinal points within the Shaykh's teachings and against Burhani practice, defined as backward and superstitious. Most importantly, the Burhani method was accused of keeping the disciples in a state of ignorance of the Islamic doctrines and texts and of promoting a totalizing submission of the disciples to the direction of the Shaykh, depriving them of the right to challenge the scriptures. The Burhaniya, which counted a vast constituency among the educated middle classes, was a hindrance to the reformist and Salafi movements. With its stress on the Shaykh-disciple relationship and ritual life, it conflicted with the reformist-minded aspiration to form 'modern Muslims' as persons capable of cultivating an individual relationship to textual sources. A reflective relation of the believers to the texts was to substitute, according to the reformists, the practice of *taqlid*, the 'blind and rote' imitation of living models. At the same time, the Burhaniya made official Islamic institutions, such as the National Sufi Council, particularly uncomfortable in their struggle to come to terms with the growing revival movement by curbing the 'excesses' in Sufi praxis and reinforcing its scriptural dimensions. See, among others, Hoffman, *Sufism*.

Arabic language. When I got to know him in 2001, Safwat's status had changed: he had just married Leila, an Italian convert to the Burhaniya and Abdel Rahim's ex-wife, and he had finally given up his stressful search for work since his Italian brethren were now willing to sustain him economically. His authority had increased so much that thanks to his intervention I solved my first ethical conflict in the field. To understand how this inversion of status was possible it is necessary first of all to explore in depth the architecture of the Burhani *awrād* pedagogy, and the specific form it has taken in its journey to Italy.

Awrād *pedagogy in Italy*

From my interviews with Shaykh Ibrahim, then Shaykh of Tariqa, on the subject of the *irshād* (teaching), I soon gathered that he considered the *awrād* practice to be 'the' method of spiritual growth and the foundation of *irshād*, the Burhani pedagogy. The *awrād* keep the Tariqa together, Shaykh Ibrahim told me in response to my questions.

As the Shaykh explained, *awrād* (sg. *wird*), are a set of standardized litanies composed of Qur'anic *āyāt* (verses) rearranged by the Shaykh, which regulate the disciples' individual paths through progressive spiritual stages (*maqāmāt*) towards the *fanā'*, annihilation in the Shaykh. Officially, a *murshid* (teacher) is responsible for assigning the *awrād* to his disciples and for their *irshād* (teaching). Every *murīd* (disciple) who has achieved the first three levels of initiation can, theoretically, become a *murshid* to someone else. Once the method of the *awrād* is established, the Tariqa grows all by itself, added the Shaykh. In practice, however, things are somewhat more complicated. Indeed the management and the performance of the *awrād* method within the Italian branch generate relations of authority which result in continuous tensions between Egyptian and Italian *murshids*.

In its diffusion to Europe, in the 1980s, the Tariqa had to face the risk endemic to many Sufi brotherhoods of losing the charismatic power of its central authority. Alongside the extension of the brotherhood across the globe, which made gatherings more problematic to attend, an additional problem resided in the converts' lack of knowledge of Arabic, which made them more difficult to guide. Translations, transliterations, and a strict organization of the spiritual path were needed to keep the Tariqa going. The *awrād* themselves have been translated into the various languages of the converts and, most importantly, transliterated in various alphabets in order to be accessible to any disciple. All the Burhani branches have been provided with booklets collecting the *awrād* in their transliterated form, alongside an *irshād* handbook describing the main tasks of a spiritual guide and the management of the *awrād* repetition sequence in relation to spiritual progression. The converts themselves, independently of the time and the modalities of their affiliation to the Tariqa, are allowed to take up the role of spiritual masters by attentively following the rules of the *irshād* handbook. With

the aim of obviating the converts' ignorance of Arabic, particular attention has been redirected to the transliterations, provided with diacritical signs that establish the correct pronunciation of the corresponding Arabic letters and the correct prosody of the verses. The *awrād* booklets provide the non-Arabic readers with a rendition of the *tajwīd* style, i.e. the set of prosodic rules that define the pronunciation of the single letters composing the *awrād*, together with the tempo and rhythm, and that are normally used in Qur'anic recitation.

This systematization of the spiritual path, pursued in order to organize the Tariqa in the absence of a daily direct relationship between the Shaykh and his followers, has actually deepened the cleavage between an embodied spiritual knowledge and intellectual knowledge of the texts. In the process of transliteration and the regulation of the repetition sequences, the *awrād* lose their importance as meaningful texts. Their efficacy is attributed nearly exclusively to performance, which calls into play the sonic dimension of the revelation, contained in the sound of the Qur'anic verses forming the *awrād*. The literal semantic meaning of the texts is backgrounded with respect to the symbolic knowledge contained and channelled by the material work of the sacred Arabic letters on the soul and the body. The significance of the *tajwīd* style and the correct pronunciation of the sacred texts are indeed supported by the *'ilm al-ḥurūf*, the science of letters, established definitively by Ibn al-ʿArabī in the 13th century, which presupposes a specific relation between Arabic letters, cosmology and bodies. On the grounds of this science, the Burhani Shaykh warns that an incorrect performance of the *awrād* is not only spiritually void but may even be dangerous for the performer, unleashing powerful spiritual forces. The value of performance for the spiritual path and, precisely, the correct ritual performance, is foregrounded with respect to oral teaching, the reading and the study of texts and Islamic scriptures.

The restructuring of the *irshād* method, working towards the decoupling of the performance of the sacred word from the semantic dimension of reading, changed the relationships of authority among disciples on the basis of their different intellectual and practical skills, and turned out to be a tool of empowerment for the immigrants within the Italian branch.

Performance and embodied knowledge

Between Jalal's departure and Safwat's arrival, the Italian disciples had been guided in their spiritual path by some of the oldest converts to the Tariqa who focused much of their efforts on the written lectures of the Shaykh, beyond other mystical treaties. Once enrolled as the Italian *murshid* (teacher), Safwat, with the Shaykh's compliance, started implementing the *awrād* method within the Italian branch of the Burhaniya, gradually sidelining the importance of oral or written lectures. As a consequence, the role of bodily techniques became primary on the path of spiritual learning, backgrounding the 'intellectual' and tex-

tual knowledge of Sufi literature and mystics. Safwat's ignorance of English and Italian and his difficulty in giving lectures became irrelevant to the successful outcome of his teaching. Conversely, his 'natural' fluency in Arabic and his embodied abilities in perceiving the spiritual power of the *awrād* letters and sounds were foregrounded: within the Italian branch Safwat was, by far, the most competent in teaching the *tajwīd*, the correct pronunciation and prosody of the *awrād*. During our interviews, Safwat eventually placed much stress on these embodied aspects of the *awrād* method, saying how essential it was for the Italian disciples to learn the proper body techniques in order to articulate the *awrād*'s sounds. The recitation of the *awrād* implies a correct movement of the lips and of the tongue, the correct pronunciation of guttural letters, alongside a concentration on proper images and the ability to glide the rosary (Egypt. coll.: *sibḥa*) through one's fingers in order to keep count of the repetitions. These are competencies, according to Safwat, that require practice in order to be acquired and naturalized as a habit. Abdel Ghafour was soon superseded in his role as Italian teacher, a role he had been holding – as the oldest and most erudite convert – since the very beginnings of the Burhaniya in Italy. All of Abdel Ghafour's symbolic capital, based on his knowledge of Sufi literature, lost importance once confronted with Safwat's embodied capital.

This reorganization of the structure of learning – from intellectual and textual to embodied and practical – corresponded with a reconfiguration of the converts' subjectivity, starting from a reordering of the hierarchy of the senses. The Italians had long been training themselves to read the transliteration of the litanies in Latin letters using a written aid. Once Safwat took over the teaching responsibilities, he asserted his competence by teaching the sound of sacred Arabic letters by means of oral repetition (as the *tajwīd* prescribes), backgrounding the importance of reading the litanies from the written aid. This implied as a consequence an increased attention to the bodily techniques of repetition. By preserving the oral and acoustic character of Qur'anic Revelation and its symbolic dimension implicit in the letters, the *tajwīd* is in the first instance a method that works corporeally through the art of listening and reciting.[23] By stressing the preeminence accorded to the sound (through pronunciation and prosody) of the *awrād* and the art of listening and reciting, i.e. the *tajwīd*, over the ability to visualize and read the written text of the awrād, Safwat, with his embodied capital, was once again challenging Abdel Ghafour's leading position which instead was grounded on intellectual knowledge. Both intellectual knowledge of the Sufi texts and the competence in reading written transliteration were not comparable with the spiritual insight provided by the embodied knowledge of the secret science of the letters. Of all those who belonged to the Italian *zāwiya*, only Safwat possessed this knowledge capital, or better put: only his body possessed this

[23] See Nelson, *The Art of Reciting*.

knowledge as an embodied memory. Safwat's past life, his long-standing practice of Sufism in Egypt, the opportunity to live within the aura of the Shaykh and, not least, the opportunity to live in Cairo, the city of the *ahl al-bayt* (the prophet's family), all represented the necessary conditions and experiences enabling him to recite in a perfect *tajwīd* style.

By virtue of the *awrād* performance, the Italians' hierarchy of senses was reshaped and hearing was foregrounded over reading. To this change corresponded a new understanding and way of practicing of Islam. Safwat soon became an irreplaceable teacher, thereby also shifting the power relations between immigrants and converts. The relevance of this reconfiguration of the hierarchy of the senses to the Italians' path in the brotherhood was confirmed to me by many of my subsequent interviews. Most of the converts highlighted the importance of *qaṣā'id* singing (the singing of mystical poems) and the beauty of the sound of the Arabic language as a determining factor in their spiritual engagement. Today the international offices of the Tariqa produce records of the best Egyptian and Sudanese voices of the Burhaniyya singing *qaṣā'id*, and sell them to the disciples. Many Italians have replaced their music cassettes with cassettes of *qaṣā'id* singing which have become the soundtrack of their car journeys or their iPods. In this case, too, Safwat's embodied memory of the *qaṣā'id* singing in Cairo was unmatched. The 'intellectual' capital of knowledge owned by the converts was twice undermined and subverted: as a form of 'textual' knowledge, it was inessential to the appraisal of the bodily techniques essential to the practice of the *awrād*, as well as to the symbolic knowledge comprised in the oral, thus acoustic, dimension of the *tajwīd*.

Conclusions

> "Existence is a letter of which you are the meaning".[24] "… The realm of letters is endowed with the most pure of languages and the most evident of eloquence".[25]
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> Ibn al-ᶜArabī

In these quotations from Ibn al-ᶜArabī the Arabic letters, and by extension the words and texts, reveal their full meaning. They invest the believer in his/her entirety with a meaning that is at once material, manifest, spiritual, intellectual, inner, *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*. This ethnographic study has looked at how the act of reading and performing the sacred Arabic letters are set apart and perceived as two different practices within the Italian branch of a Sufi brotherhood. I have argued how the difference between the material and the semantic dimensions of letters and

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[24] Ibn al-ᶜArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Cairo 1329H, chapter 4, 76, as cited in Denis Gril, "La science des lettres", in: *Les illuminations de La Mecque*, Michel Chodkiewicz, ed., Paris: Albin Michel 1997, 165-282, here 198 (my translation from French to English).

[25] Ibn al-ᶜArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Cairo 1329H, chapter 2, 2, as cited in Denis Gril, "La science", 247 (my translation from French to English).

words, between text and performance, is polarized by the specific dynamics of Islam and conversion in Italy, and further articulated through cultural stereotypes.

The point of view of the Italians converts, I have argued, is rooted in their exposure to two mutually reinforcing discourses which converge in foregrounding an intellectual engagement with the scriptures over the performance of rituals: on one hand a discourse that blends Sufism, Oriental philosophies and the Orient, informing certain Italian milieus of converts linked to Traditionalism, and on the other hand the long shadow of Islamic reformist discourse, which finds echoes in the debate on Italian Islam. Such a text/performance binary is then further enhanced by its coupling with a form of cultural essentialism current in contemporary Italian discourse about immigrants and that is embraced by both immigrants and converts in the face of the social problematics of a mixed brotherhood. Indeed, the Burhanis I met while attending the Italian *zāwiya* consciously overlapped the text/performance binary onto a reified cultural difference distinguishing 'Italians' from 'Egyptians'. Whereas these prosaic essentialisms and binaries do not actually map onto socio-cultural realities, they are in turn performative: essentialized discourses orient everyday praxis, make sense of experience and support forms of empowerment and of domination. My interlocutors consciously uncouple the intellectual mastery of Sufi knowledge from the performance of the spiritual path, linking them with two different forms of knowledge, one intellectual, the other practical. In turn, these different forms of knowledge call into play different cultural competencies and configurations of subjectivity which are played out in the encounter, at times difficult, between Italians and immigrants, generating subject positions and relations of authority.

Burning With Love: Consumerism and Recent Trends in Islamic Music in Turkey

Songül Karahasanoğlu

The distinction between traditional religious music and Islamic popular music is an essential one, as it highlights the social and cultural changes that have resulted from the evolution of Turkish society in the modern era. Religious music plays an important role in Turkish culture. It encompasses not only a huge variety of musical styles, but also has a close relationship with Ottoman court music, so much so that the styles sometimes overlap, and some styles are even linked to folk music.[1] However, changes in the music policy of the republican regime, together with the rise of popular music and rapid social change in Turkey, have had decisive effects on Islamic music. In particular, the influence of popular music on contemporary Islamic music has been both dramatic and distinct from the influence exerted by traditional religious music; however, the same political and cultural forces have influenced them both.

Today, religious music is still very important at a community level but it is also shaped by politics. Throughout this paper, I will use the term 'Islamic popular music'[2] for the new Islamic music. I will specifically look at the interaction between the state, political power, and economic structures which have had an impact on the formation of Islamic popular music. The shift towards Islamization in Turkey has two axes. One axis refers to phenomena such as 'Islamic dress', particularly for women, and musical composition backed by cultural strategies. The other axis is the desire to seize political power, and to institute a political system based on Islamic principles and ideals.

The motivation for this study was my wish to understand the phenomenon of Islamic popular music in Turkey and how it is influenced by social transformation in practical and contradictory ways. Islamic popular music differs from Turkish popular music in its texts, melodic structure, and its use of instruments. Turkish popular music does not constitute a well-defined musical genre, but changes depending on dynamics of the nation's society. In Turkey, the term 'popular music' has caught on from the West but, in fact, Turkish popular music does not bear

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1 This applies to the music of Christian and Jewish communities as well; in fact, until the early 20th century the traditional religious music of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities shared many characteristics. See Maureen Jackson, *Mixing Musics: Turkish Jewry and the Urban Landscape of a Sacred Song*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2013.

2 In Turkey, this phenomenon is also called 'Green Pop' (*yeşil pop*).

many similarities to Western popular music as regards its forms and melodies.[3] Rather, popular music that developed under the influence of Western popular music has been further influenced by Ottoman court music, folk music and Arabesk[4] music. In the following, the term traditional Islamic music mainly refers to the musical forms in the realm of Sunni religious practice, as Sunni Islam is the religious culture of the majority of Turkish Muslims. In this respect, the topic that is discussed here are the developments in music which affect the majority of the Turkish population.

Traditional Islamic music practices

Traditional Islamic music in Turkey can be divided into two main forms, each with several subdivisions. Based on their location of performance, these forms are distinguished as *Mosque Music* and *Tekke*[5] / *Brotherhood Music*; based on their modes of usage, they are also called *Şer'i Music*[6] and *Sufi Music*. In spite of the many common characteristics in religious musical forms, mosque music and brotherhood music have distinctive styles and expressions in part owing to differences in the music of the religious orders. One important difference between mosque and brotherhood music is that no instruments are played in the mosque. Although nearly all of the Sufi orders in Turkey use a frame drum (*bendir*)[7] as a rhythm instrument, instrumentation also differs between brotherhoods. For instance, Mevlevi rites are performed with the accompaniment of various traditional instruments such as the flute (*ney*), lute (*rebap*), drums (*kudüm*), short-necked lute (*ud*), zither (*kanun*) and long-necked lute (*tanbur*).[8]

Almost all musicians in the field of traditional Islamic music know how to recite the Qur'an; their musical works have a worship-oriented character. Mosque music like forms of Qur'anic recitation, litanies in praise of God, or eulogies for the prophet[9] has been further performed and developed in the Sufi brotherhoods with

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3 On developments in Turkish popular music see Songül Karahasanoğlu and Gabriel Skoog, "Synthesizing Identity: Gestures of Filiation and Affiliation in Turkish Popular Music", *Asian Music* 40 (2009), 52-71.

4 Arabesk is a particular style of music in Turkey which has become increasingly popular in recent years. It is characterized by its Middle Eastern and Arabic melodies, but also its unique synthesis of Eastern and Western music forms. For more on this style see Martin Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate: Music and Musicians in Modern Turkey*, Oxford: Clarendon 1992.

5 Tekke is a dervish lodge.

6 Music within the rituals prescribed or recommended by Islamic legal rules.

7 *Bendir*: a large frame drum.

8 *Ney*: end-blown flute; *rebap*: bowed, pear-shaped lute held vertically on the knees; *kudüm*: a pair of small kettledrums; *ud* (Engl. oud): short-necked, fretless, plucked lute; *kanun*: trapezoidal, plucked zither; *tanbur*: long-necked, plucked lute with frets.

9 I use a musical-technical approach to these forms of vocal art, thus classifying them as 'music', though many of its practitioners would not refer to them as 'music'.

a spiritual leader such as a shaykh or a dervish. In this context, music is not considered a professional art form but rather a spiritual vehicle to reach God. The musical repertory of the Sufi brotherhoods, especially that of the Mevlevi and Bektaşi orders, involves highly skilled music, employed in a carefully arranged ceremony. The most important property of Mevlevi *âyins* (hymns) and Bektaşi *cems* (ritual congregations) is their combination of Sufi ideals with religious music and dance. The role of music is bound up with the communication of spiritual meaning. Still, discussions about the permissibility and the degree of the incorporation of musical practices into religious rites continue between scholars of various positions and backgrounds to the present day.

Government policy and music

In the 18th and 19th centuries, brotherhoods had been involved in a struggle with the shrinking Ottoman Empire and the Sultan's weakening power in order to gain their own political control. The 20th century was marked by the new republic's political agenda of modernization that was based on laicism and the nation state. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the borders between religion and state were definitively drawn in 1924 with three consecutive laws before brotherhoods were abolished as corporate bodies in 1925.[10] After 1925, none of the religious orders were legally allowed to exist, although some continued their religious rites in secret. The statements by Atatürk, the state's founding president, indicated that the principle of laicism, along with republicanism, was the foundation of the new regime and the nation state. The agenda of Turkey's founding elite was to remove religion from the public realm and reduce it to a matter of individual faith and practice.

Although the relevant law concerning the closing of dervish lodges was enacted for political reasons, it resulted in the disappearance of a unique cultural practice: the musical and educational system of *meşk*. Dervish lodges, one of Turkish music's main sources, relied on a form of music education called *meşk*, in which an individual or groups of apprentices imitated the master's vocal or instrumental phrases and by which the musical repertoire and techniques were handed down from master to pupil. *Meşk* was a vital part of study for novices who traditionally lived in brotherhoods during the period of their maturation. With the closing of the dervish lodges the practice of *meşk* was gradually erased, bringing about a loss of musical knowledge and performance practices.

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10 "Tekke ve Zaviyelerle Türbelerin Seddine ve Türbedarlıklar ile Birtakım Ünvanların Men ve İlgasına Dair Kanun No. 677", in: *Düstur* III, 7 (2nd edition, 1944), 113; *R.G.*, 13 Kanunuevvel 1341, 243.

The rise of consumerism and its effects

The 1950s saw the rise of a multi-party system in Turkish politics. While some parties continued to support laic policy, other parties with a religious agenda were established. After 1960 some Sufi brotherhoods resurfaced as legal foundations and associations. In the late 1970s the government relaxed its ban on certain kinds of religious activities, and Sufi music choruses were formed at Ankara and Istanbul State Radio Stations. In 1991, the very first Religious State Chorus was established in Konya[11] followed soon after by another one in Istanbul. Crucial for this development was another political and economic incident: the end of the state monopoly on radio and television.

> Perhaps the ending of the monopoly of Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) in 1990 was the most important of these social ruptures [rapid economic integration into the world markets and the end of some vestiges of Kemalist political culture and ideals], in that it eventually entailed a considerable change in the narrative forms conveying social and political messages to the public. Thus, for the dissemination of Islamic messages and the creation of its popular cultural forms, the commercialization of television and radio played an important role.[12]

In parallel with these social and political changes, not only have religious associations been given more importance, but there has also been an increase in the number of theological high schools which are aimed at directly training and guiding Sunni Islamic theologians whose views on music remain antagonistic. Meanwhile, religious musical forms have been transformed by the direction of economic and political objectives and have been presented on the market in the easily-consumed form of popular music. This new musical genre, Islamic popular music, uses all possible forms of music in order to disseminate itself. Rather than establishing its own norms and standards of quality it has merely adopted available musical styles, particularly those of Turkish popular music. In its search for artistic expression, Islamic popular music uses popular music's instruments, scales, sound ranges, and other features to become more widespread. The biggest difference to popular music, though, emerges in the lyrics. In this new style of music the most crucial feature is its religious and political lyrics, as we will see in the examples below.

The institution of *meşk* and therefore the knowledge of the musical practice connected to it had faded during the first half of the 20th century. Outside the brotherhoods and in the course of the developments within Islamic popular music, Sufi music started to be performed with electronic sounds and in such a way

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11 Located in central Anatolia, the centre of the Mevlevi brotherhood.

12 Ayşe Saktanber, "'We Pray Like You Have Fun': New Islamic Youth in Turkey between Intellectualism and Popular Culture", in: *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber, eds, London and New York: I.B. Tauris 2002, 254-276, here 267.

that traditional Turkish and Western popular music intermingled with one other and established new forms. Furthermore, religious music as it was transmitted in concert halls, other performance venues, and through the mass media had been altered so much that it adopted a different style.

From the late 1970s, Turkish State Radio and Television (TRT) started broadcasting religious programmes and private companies produced cassettes and CDs of religious performers and choruses for purchase. The consumption of entertainment products further increased since the 1990s, becoming pervasive in the 2000s, and production companies have gravitated to this profitable area. For instance, many Rock, Greek and Kurdish music CDs have been released and assumed their place on the market, but none of them hold as large a market share as Islamic popular music. In 2004, ten percent of the total sales of 3.5 million albums belonged to Islamic popular music. In 2006, "Islamic music" became a special category in the country's popular music awards.

When we look at the commercial aspects, we notice that the largest distributor of Islamic popular music is *Azim Distribution Company* (*Azim Dağıtım*), encompassing 116 subsidiaries in 2008. This company does not only deliver but also produces CDs, cassettes, and videos. Though it produces both Islamic and non-Islamic music it only distributes Islamic music through its huge network. The company's new headquarter was inaugurated by no other than Abdüllatif Şener, Turkey's then deputy prime minister and minister of state. Azim Distribution Company carries the albums of popular Islamic performers like Mehmet Emin Ay and Abdurrahman Önül whose CD sales rates are higher than those of better known pop-music singers.

These works were commercially produced in order to take advantage of popular trends, rather than being created with the techniques and knowledge of the past era's traditional religious music and culture. They are commercial products, of no musically creative value and with clear political agendas. Tuğrul İnançer, director of the State Historical Turkish Music Ensemble and also leader of the Cerrahi Sufi order, supports the distribution and consumption of any religious music as a way of attracting more adherents.[13] In the following, the different periods and its related styles of Islamic popular music will be outlined.

Phases of Islamic popular music

Until the late 1980s, the Islamic community in Turkey had frowned upon the production and performance of music, and only the public performance of hymns (*ilahî*) – accompanied always by religious admonition – was deemed acceptable. From the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, a new political music style called "holy warfare" (*cihad*) catering to demands for Islamic music appeared on

[13] Personal interview with Tuğrul Inançer, 29 May 2006, Istanbul.

the market. This music resembled military marching songs – it was, in fact, musically very similar to the leftist marches of the 1970s – and its lyrics focused on the struggles in Bosnia, Afghanistan, or Chechnya and on Islamic fighters in general.[14] This type of music was made for political purposes and produced quickly without a true and deeper knowledge of the tradition of religious music. One example of this type of song (*ezgi* or *marş*) is the following, performed by Ahmet Turan Öztürk:

Burning Soul[15]	**Can Yanar**
This time is not the time for fun and joy	Eğlenmek zamanı değil bu zaman
Beware and come to yourself brother, beware	Kendine gel aman kardeşim aman
This is the end of the road, this is the end time	İşte yolun sonu bu ahir zaman
The wayward one burns, sufferer burns, soul burns	Garip yanar mazlum yanar can yanar
The wayward one burns, sufferer burns, soul burns	Garip yanar mazlum yanar can yanar
The sick one burns, eyes burn, soul burns	Hasta yanar ceşmir yanar can yanar
I am punished, beloved Azerbaijan burns	Ceza yerim can Azerbaycan yanar
Palestine, Chechnya burns	Filistin'im Çeçenistan'ım yanar
Thanks Lord, for the Moslems burn at last[16]	Şükür ey azda Müslüman yanar

Lyrics and vocal: Ahmet Turan Öztürk
Composition: Doğancan

The increasing presence of Islamic thought and culture on television and radio in the 1990s caused a decline in the popularity and attendance of hymn singing and public gatherings. Yet, the performance of hymns was merely transferred from public venues such as cafés and restaurants to the radio and television. Hymns were perceived as 'alternative' music and attracted the younger generation's attention. Some productions sold as well as those of well-known popular music performers. In 1996, after the Islamic Refah Party came into power, things began to change. Large masses of people became frustrated when their expectations were not met by the party. This was reflected in music as well. In these years, the Islamic community began to create a new culture via a new dress code and a new music style.[17] Although the use of political lyrics became less common, the stylistic similarity Islamic popular music shares with all kinds of popular music attracted a larger audience. During this period, the late 1990s, a small but significant development in Islamic popular music occurred. Some artists deviated from traditional themes, such as those mentioned above, and began to sing about human (rather than divine) love. Such albums sparked interest and helped this music category to develop. While some performed Sufi music with instruments usually not em-

14 See Songül Karahasanoğlu and İştar Gözaydin, "Popüler Dini Musiki", *Aralık* 2 (2008), 30-43.
15 Ahmet Turan Öztürk, *Can Yanar*, cassette, Istanbul: Ahenk Müzik 1995.
16 All translations from Turkish are mine.
17 For more on this new type of popular culture, using Islamic cultural codes, see Saktanber, "'We Pray Like You Have Fun'".

ployed in traditional Sufi music such as the lute or zither, others created a completely new style by incorporating electronic sounds, jazz, or flamenco.

In the period between 2000 and 2005, a new musical style emerged, called "zikir pop". Traditionally, the *zikir* (arab. *dhikr*) is a ceremony conducted in the Sufi brotherhoods where members chant "Allah" and induce a trance by means of rhythmic breathing. *Zikir pop* combined rhythmic chanting with popular melodic and instrumental features. One example of this genre is the following, performed by Sami Özer.

Wearing a Turban[18]

With inspiration I watched Muhammad last night
I watched Muhammed, my beloved Ahmed in the mirror of my heart
Wearing a clergyman's turban on his head, covered with a green shirt
Surrounded all around by lovers I have watched Muhammed, my beloved Ahmed

I am a moth turning around your flame, my master
With all his lovers, I have watched Muhammed, my beloved Ahmed
I found a drop from the ocean, balsam to my grief
Last night I fulfilled my fate, I watched Muhammed, my beloved Ahmed

Emamesi Başında

İlham ile dün gece seyrettim Muhammed'i
Ayine-i kalbimde seyrettim Muhammed'i can Ahmed'i
Emamesi başında yeşil hulle eğninde
Dört yanında yari ile seyrettim Muhammed'i can Ahmed'i

Pervaneyim şem'ine şeyhim, azizim bile
Cümle aşıklar ile seyrettim Muhammed'i can Ahmed'i
Katre-i umman buldum, derdime derman buldum
Dün gece kadre erdim seyrettim Muhammed'i can Ahmed'i

Lyrics: Yunus Emre[19]
Composition: Anonymous
Vocals: Sami Özer

Abdurrahman Önül, whose songs are bestsellers among other hymn singers, has so far 28 albums on the market. In a 2004 interview, he states that his albums are so popular because the hymns express the strong wish for the ultimate union with God and longing for the prophet Mohammed as well as the longing for sacred places like Mecca and Medina. He explains: "In my music the rhythm comes first. On the other hand, I prefer to add some instruments which are unusual in religious music such as the *bağlama*[20], violin, and zither (*kanun*) to make my music more attractive to the younger generation".[21] Celaleddin Ada – who

18 Sami Özer, *İnliyoriz Hasretinle*, CD, Istanbul: Beya Müzik & Yapım 2000.
19 Yunus Emre (d. 1320/21) was a Turkish mystic poet whose oeuvre is still very popular today.
20 *Bağlama*: a long-necked lute, used especially in folk music.
21 Tûba Kabacaoğlu, "İlahi kasetleri uçuşa geçti", *Aksiyon* 511 (20 September 2004).

only uses his first name on his albums[22] – is another successful performer in this field. One of his hymns goes as follows:

I Devote My Soul to You[23]	**Canım Feda**
The tears I shed	Şu döktüğüm göz yaşlarım
Are all for you, oh love	Senin için ey sevgili
All my prayers at dawn are for you	Seherlerde dualarım
For you, oh dearly beloved!	Senin için ya habibi
For you, all for you!	Senin için senin için
I'll give up life for you!	Canım feda senin için
For you, all for you!	Senin için senin için
This life, a sacrifice to you!	Şu can feda senin için

Lyrics: Celaleddin
Composition: Celaleddin

Hasan Taştan Yıldız, the general manager of Azim Distribution Company, believes that *zikir pop* is much more close to traditional religious music rather than a politically oriented style.[24] Mustafa Demirci, a performer who has been in the sector of Islamic popular music since the 1990s and whose albums remain bestsellers, believes it is the feeling of rhythm which makes them popular. He explains that people lead fast-paced lives, so rhythm is essential for them. When the names of God and the prophet are uttered, the hymns become even more attractive, he states.[25] It is in this period that music with *bendir* or *def* (tambourine) solos and hymns were produced, and folk songs were completely changed through the addition of religious lyrics. For example, a traditional folk song like "I took off from mount Ağrı" (*Ağrı dağından uçtum*) was changed to "Let the lovers burn with your fire, Lord"; in another folk song the lyrics "On the roads of Sivas" (*Sivas'ın yollarında*) became "On the road to our target".[26] A music producer whom I spoke to told me that the performers of this kind of music believe that by changing the lyrics in this way they will succeed in converting the folk-music listener to Islam.[27]

In 2005, the sales of *zikir pop* dropped whereas albums focussing on life after death became bestsellers. On the other hand, performances of Sufi music and whirling dervishes rose in popularity. The professionalized performances of whirling dervishes provided an opportunity to earn money in coffee shops and restaurants (see Plates, figure 11), and even on world tours. These performances separated

22 This may well be an allusion to the famous mystic poet Celaleddin Rumi (d. 1273).
23 Celaleddin, *Sürgün*, Azim Distribution 2006.
24 Kabacaoğlu, "İlahi kasetleri".
25 Kabacaoğlu, "İlahi kasetleri".
26 These songs are anonymous and well known in Turkey. During my long-term research on Islamic popular music I recorded some of the mentioned examples in concerts between 2002 and 2006.
27 Personal interview with Metin Gım, Istanbul, 8 September 2005.

Sufi music from Sufism and placed it into new contexts: from devotional to public and economic settings.

Ender Doğan, a well-known musician in the field of classical and Sufi music, comments upon these new developments: "Sufi music was not known to have much popularity among large masses of people and was not able to attract the crowds. So the question was how to bring Sufi music to large crowds."[28] But there were still some problems to be solved, the most important of which was the use of women's voices. Though it has never been explicitly stated that women's voices are prohibited, they are essentially absent from the Islamic popular music market, although they have sporadically featured in the background. I have even come across recordings which use children's voices instead of female vocals. One of the few female performers, Serpil Özkasap, who published two *zikir pop* albums, says she has been heavily criticized because she sang on the tracks herself.[29]

Radical Islam has rejected music and its performance. Its protagonists state that it is a sin for professional dancers or musicians to perform and that the performer should be afraid of God.[30] Duran Kömürcü, a writer for the conservative newspaper *Vakit*, claims that the starting point for the corruption of morals is the usage of instruments and that the playing of string and wind instruments goes against God's law. In his view, melody is the road that leads one to the devil; it is the expression of devilish ways and feelings.[31]

Conclusion

Although there are some people and establishments that try to keep traditional religious music alive, they are in the minority. On the other hand there is a big demand for religious music which goes hand in hand with political Islam. To meet this demand there has been a rapid qualitative and quantitative change evidenced in the styles of religious music especially over the last twenty years. The main problem is that the music and associated rituals have been altered, alienating them from their original purpose. Further, political Islam, a modern ideology rooted in the nineteenth century, has become more and more visible in the political arena in Turkey. Over the past eighty years, divisions between Turkey's political and social body have deepened. Yet Islamic popular culture, especially with regard to music, has also been influenced by modernization processes over the last couple of decades. People who are in search of an individual identity that is also represented at a social level take shelter in an 'Islamic' way of life and its habits.

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28 Naciye Kaynak, *Yeni Şafak*, Istanbul, 19 November 2003.

29 Gülden Aydın, "Müsülman hanımlar erkek sesinden bıktık diyor", *Hürriyet*, 17 November 2001; http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/index/ArsivNews.aspx?id=37467 (accessed 20 April 2015).

30 http://www.ehlisunnet.biz/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=160 (accessed 2005).

31 Pervin Kaplan, "Kadın sesi hâlâ günah sayılıyor", *Sabah*, 31 May 2003; http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2003/05/31/g03.html (accessed 20 April 2015).

Islamic popular music has become a form of rebel language with a political agenda in reaction to what is felt to be exclusion from the modern world. Most music in this category is produced entirely for consumption aimed at promoting a political agenda and catering to the demands of fashion. Distributors, producers, performers, and other players in the music industry have collaborated in taking advantage of fads and trends and trying to gain more religious adherents through their music. Popular consumerist genres such as *zikir pop* have borrowed superficially from traditional religious music but are far removed from its original forms and spiritual purpose.

The interplay of the state, political power, and economic structures becomes manifest in the search for a new Islamic identity. This search has made its mark on the state, on society at large, and on individual relations, causing a transformation in nearly every field – and certainly in the field of religious music. It has been shown that issues of cultural identity, socio-economic discrimination, and politics directly affect the production of Islamic popular music. However, this new sector has not actually created something new on a musical level. Without established practices and forms of its own, it rather borrows forms, sounds, and melodic features from Turkish popular music and traditional religious music.

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Plates

Figure 1: The *quba*ᶜ. Photo by Marianus Hundhammer

Figure 2: Touching the *quba*ᶜ. Photo by Marianus Hundhammer

Figure 3: The chapel cave of Mar Abda El Mouchammar in Zikrit, leaving photos on a board or baby items (Mar Abda being a specialist on baby issues) for vows. 2011. Photo by Nour Farra-Haddad

Figure 4: The sacred well of Mar Nohra in Smar Jbeil, taking the *baraka* from the well by inserting one's head in the hole. 2009. Photo by Nour Farra-Haddad

Figure 5: The sacred stone (*maḥdaleh*) of the *maqām* of Imam Ouzai in front of his tomb. 2012. Photo by Nour Farra-Haddad

Figure 6: riżāʾ andākhtan. Abbildungsnachweis: Turkestanskii Alʿbom, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-09953-00040 (digital file from Part 2, vol. 2, pl. 91, no. 301)

Figure 7: kulcha dar baghal andākhtan. Abbildungsnachweis: Turkestanskij Alʿbom, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-09953-00041 (digital file from Part 2, vol. 2, pl. 91, no. 302)

Figure 8: buakhurdī. Abbildungsnachweis: Turkestanskij Alʿbom, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-09953-00042 (digital file from Part 2, vol. 2, pl. 91, no. 303)

Figure 9: bazm-i arvāh-i pīr. Abbildungsnachweis: Turkestanskij Alʿbom, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-09953-00043 (digital file from Part 2, vol. 2, pl. 91, no. 304)

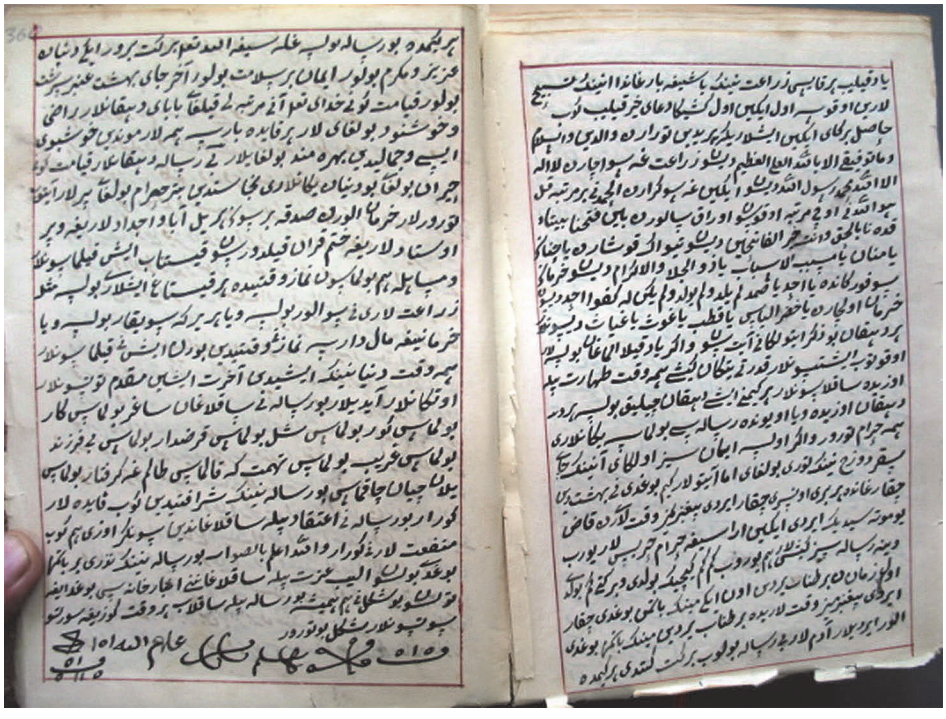

Figure 10: risāla

Figure 11: Istanbul, Yeşilköy Restaurant in Ramadan. 2005. Photo by Songül Karahasanoğlu

Index

المعهد الألماني للأبحاث الشرقية

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